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**THE CONSTRUCTION OF OTTOMAN ASIA AND ITS MUSLIM PEOPLES IN WELLINGTON HOUSE'S PROPAGANDA AND ASSOCIATED LITERATURE, 1914-1918**

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**THE CONSTRUCTION OF OTTOMAN ASIA AND  
ITS MUSLIM PEOPLES IN WELLINGTON  
HOUSE'S PROPAGANDA AND ASSOCIATED  
LITERATURE, 1914-1918**

**BY**

**SADIA MCEVOY  
KING'S COLLEGE LONDON**

**THESIS SUBMITTED TOWARD THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

## ABSTRACT

### **THE CONSTRUCTION OF OTTOMAN ASIA AND ITS MUSLIM PEOPLES IN WELLINGTON HOUSE'S PROPAGANDA AND ASSOCIATED LITERATURE, 1914-1918**

Sadia McEvoy, *King's College London*

Whilst the subject of the British propaganda project during World War One has attracted a reasonable amount of attention, this has focused largely on Britain's war with Germany, on the Home Front or else on efforts to win American support. Beyond the study of events in Armenia, very little consideration has been given to how propagandists and writers responded to her war with Turkey. This thesis uses a range of materials, primarily books, pamphlets and illustrated newspapers produced by Wellington House, or by writers associated with it, to chart the nature and development of Britain's construction of Ottoman Asia and its Muslim peoples during the war. Beginning by chronologically reviewing the development of the government's official policy towards the Ottoman Empire, it then turns more specifically to the evolution of propaganda relating to the Middle East, concluding with an examination of fiction written largely by novelists co-opted by Wellington House. The thesis shows a relatively benign and unfocused approach giving way in mid-1916 to a more coherent and aggressive policy which continued for the remainder of the war. It demonstrates that Britain's response was not just a reflection of static cultural assumptions as is frequently supposed but a careful balancing act as she sought to maintain the support of the Empire's one hundred million Muslim subjects whilst also engaging in war against the Ottoman caliphate and, in due course, laying claim to her territory. The construction of the Ottoman Empire and its Muslim peoples in British propaganda was part of a bigger, and longer, picture of imperial history and ambition. Above all, it was a textual exercise in which the propagandists attempted to articulate and legitimise Britain's entitlement to the imperial territory within her possession and that which she aspired to attain.

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## Introduction

This study is not an account of Britain's war with Turkey and is concerned only indirectly with military and diplomatic events. It does not claim to be a comprehensive survey of the British wartime propaganda project. Nor is it an analysis of Islam or of the Ottoman Empire during the war. What it does attempt is an investigation of wartime attitudes towards Ottoman Asia and its Muslim peoples through official propaganda and associated literature. Or, more precisely, perhaps, it is an investigation of the 'politics of knowledge' regarding Ottoman Asia and its Muslim peoples.<sup>1</sup> Knowledge is not produced, disseminated or received spontaneously but in a specific time and place, and to understand it requires context. The thesis seeks to do just that: to show not only what was said but why it was said. As A.P. Thornton observed, 'If we do not think to ask, "Why did they think that?", we know less about the past than we think'.<sup>2</sup>

Resting on the belief that knowledge is culturally constructed and historically determined, this study is less concerned with 'truths' about the wartime Ottoman Empire than it is with understanding British representations of it. Fundamental to this process is a recognition of the importance of Britain's imperial past, her imperial strategies and her imperial goals. This is therefore a study as much concerned with empire and imperialism as it is with the Great War. A familiar narrative of British imperial history has the war as a watershed, a point at which the Empire's struts began to crumble. In Judith Brown's words, it became part of the textbook orthodoxy of twentieth-century history that world war was 'a

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<sup>1</sup> Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism* (Cambridge, 2010), p.2.

<sup>2</sup> A. P. Thornton, 'The Shaping of Imperial History' in Robin W. Winks ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume V: Historiography* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 612-634, p.616.

powerful solvent of the overseas empires of European states'.<sup>3</sup> From this point of view the war years are sacrificed as a distinct period in which the nature of British imperialism can usefully be studied. To approach the past in this way is, in the words of Jay Winter, 'to invite distortion by losing a sense of its messiness, its non-linearity, its vigorous and stubbornly visible incompatibilities'.<sup>4</sup> War demands that, to survive, an imperial power must be at its most coherent and ruthless and so, far from being merely a bookmark between the Empire's zenith and the onset of its decline, the war years offer a stimulating, vital period in which to explore how British imperial power was sustained and understood.

At the heart of the British imperial project, at least the imperial project as it stood in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, was an idea: that British imperialism was a force for good, underwritten by the self-evident virtues of British civilisation, the cornerstones of which were perceived as morality and progress. During the war the idea of the British imperial project coalesced with the notion that the Entente was fighting, not to destroy a nation, but to preserve 'civilisation' against a 'nest of evil ideas'.<sup>5</sup> In H.G. Wells's words 'the ultimate purpose of this war is propaganda, the destruction of certain beliefs, and the creation of others'.<sup>6</sup> If the war was a 'conflict of cultures', then Britain's culture was informed by her imperial self.<sup>7</sup> Thus, wartime propaganda and imperial ideology were intimately connected and whilst this contention is true of all of her propaganda, it applies particularly to representations of non-Western peoples.

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<sup>3</sup> Judith M. Brown, 'War and the Colonial Relationship: Britain, India and the War of 1914-1918', in M.R.D. Foot (ed.), *War and Society: Historical Essays in Honour and Memory of J.R. Western 1928-1971* (London, 1973), pp.85-106, p.85.

<sup>4</sup> Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge, 1995), p.5.

<sup>5</sup> H.G. Wells, *The War That Will End War* (London, 1914), p.90.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.91.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.90.

Britain's wartime relations with Muslims offer an excellent justification for Winter's cautionary words. It was a messy, complex situation that required careful handling. On the one hand, she was dependent on her Empire, 'said to contain a hundred million Mohammedan subjects of the King', to contribute to her war effort and preserve her imperial status.<sup>8</sup> On the other, she was at war with Turkey, ostensible head, both temporal and spiritual, of the Islamic faith. Whilst promoting self-determination for the Muslim minorities of the Ottoman Empire, she simultaneously sought to preserve the status quo in India and Egypt. Propagandist literature reveals these outward concerns, whilst also illuminating the inward preoccupations and conflicts besetting Britain during this period both as belligerent and as a nation and society coming to terms with the challenges posed by the onset of the twentieth century.

### ***Propaganda and the War***

The authoritative overview of the First World War and official propaganda remains *British Propaganda during the First World War, 1914-1918* by Sanders and Taylor, published in 1982.<sup>9</sup> The other two significant, and much cited, secondary sources are Buitenhuis' *The Great War of Words* and Messinger's *British Propaganda and the State in the First World War*, although neither use primary source material as thoroughly or effectively as do Sanders and Taylor.<sup>10</sup> Since 1989 there have been a further two noteworthy edited collections, *A Call To Arms: Propaganda, Public Opinion, and Newspapers in the Great War*, and,

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<sup>8</sup> 'Appendix (b) Official Press Bureau Instructions', Notice D.607, 15 November 1917, TNA INF 4/4B.

<sup>9</sup> M.L. Sanders and P.M. Taylor, *British Propaganda during the First World War, 1914-1918* (London, 1982).

<sup>10</sup> Peter Buitenhuis, *The Great War of Words: Literature as Propaganda 1914-1918 and After* (London, 1989) and Gary S. Messinger, *British Propaganda and the State in the First World War* (Manchester, 1992).

more recently, *World War I and Propaganda*.<sup>11</sup> In addition, Philip Taylor, widely considered the leading scholar of propaganda in the Anglophone world, contributed a further chapter on the Great War in his 1995 overview of the history of propaganda, *Munitions of the Mind*.<sup>12</sup> Two trends stand out from a reading of these books: first, a geographical focus on the Western and Home Fronts and on propaganda aimed at the United States and, second, an inclination, similarly Western-centric, to measure the success of the British propaganda effort against equivalent German efforts, primarily to sustain morale or else to secure the sympathy, and in due course the outright support, of America. Only in Paddock's 2014 book is there an emphasis on how imperial obligations and ambitions helped shape aspects of the propaganda effort during the war. In engaging with this relatively fresh perspective, Paddock's compilation, whilst not including essays on Turkey or the Middle East, considers Indian and African soldiers in European propaganda, and contains contributions on Ireland, South Africa, and Jamaica, amongst others.

Academic attention concerning propaganda relating to the Ottoman Empire has to date been principally concerned with the atrocities committed by the Turks against the Armenian population in 1915. There are a number of scholarly works on the subject whose most substantive discourse concerns attempts to identify intent and ascribe responsibility for atrocities that are often depicted as a Muslim versus Christian clash but are also attributed to other causes such as a backlash against the actions of Armenian revolutionaries or merely as the consequence of the pressures and privations of war. It remains an emotive and heavily politicised topic. For example, earlier this – centenary – year, by defining the massacres as 'genocide', Pope Francis incurred the wrath of the Turkish government, which

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<sup>11</sup> Troy Paddock (ed.), *A Call to Arms. Propaganda, Public Opinion, and Newspapers in the Great War* (Westport, Connecticut, 2004) and Troy Paddock (ed.), *World War I and Propaganda* (Leiden, 2014). Whilst the number of overviews is limited, there are a number of important works that consider specific aspects, such as Alan Kramer and John Horne, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven, 2001) and David Monger's detailed analysis of the NWAC, *Patriotism and Propaganda in First World War Britain* (Liverpool, 2012).

<sup>12</sup> Philip M. Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind: A History of Propaganda from the Ancient World to the Present Era* (Manchester, 1995).

continues to rebut this definition, and occasioned the withdrawal of the Turkish envoy from the Vatican.<sup>13</sup> American demographer Justin McCarthy is probably the most vocal Western scholar to oppose the definition of genocide. A prolific writer on the subject, McCarthy has expressed outrage that whereas Viscount Bryce's report on German atrocities committed against civilians in 1914 in Belgium and France (the 'White Book') was discredited after the war, Bryce's propagandist work on Turkish atrocities against Armenian civilians (the 'Blue Book') was not. Its continued endorsement, McCarthy argues, reflects ongoing Western efforts to undermine and vilify the East.<sup>14</sup> Of greater relevance to this research are more nuanced accounts as found, for example, in the work of Joanne Laycock, Donald Bloxham and, in the context of scholarship on the war from the Ottoman perspective more generally, that of historians such as Michael Reynolds and Eugene Rogan.<sup>15</sup> Such research moves beyond the polemical by attempting to place the genocide within its geopolitical context. Bloxham and Reynolds, for example, convincingly demonstrate how Western interference and a growing appreciation, dating from the Congress of Berlin in 1878, of the necessity of using the national idea to legitimise and consolidate power, undermined and eventually destroyed the polyethnic basis of the Ottoman state structure. However, this thesis is less concerned with why the massacres occurred, or the humanitarian response they engendered, than with the propagandists' reaction to them, which was, of course, determined within the context of bigger strategic concerns. Thus, for example, it offers fresh insights on how and why the Blue

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<sup>13</sup> In this research it is taken as a given that the events occurred, that they were officially orchestrated and that they fall within the legal definition of genocide as defined by the Geneva Convention of 1948.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Justin McCarthy, *The Ottoman Peoples and the End of Empire: Historical Endings* (London, 2001) and Justin McCarthy, *The Armenian Rebellion at Van* (Salt Lake City, 2006). Michael M. Gunter's, *Armenian History and the Question of Genocide* (Basingstoke, 2011) is a more recent attempt at putting forward the Turkish version of events and does so in a more balanced and historical fashion than McCarthy.

<sup>15</sup> Joanne Laycock, *Imagining Armenia: Orientalism, Ambiguity and Intervention* (Manchester, 2009), Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians* (Oxford, 2005), Michael A. Reynolds, *Shattering Empires, The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, 1908-1918* (Cambridge, 2011) and Eugene Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans, The Great War in the Middle East, 1914-1920* (London, 2015).

Book was produced but does not seek to probe the accuracy of its contents or the extent to which it prompted a philanthropic response.

The war and its consequences have drawn increasing attention from historians of the Middle East, including interest in propaganda efforts connected to the campaigns in Mesopotamia and Palestine. With an emphasis on the Zionist movement, Eitan Bar-Yosef and James Renton have considered the nature of the propaganda effort in 1917 and 1918, as British successes in the Middle East led to the ‘liberation’ of significant and symbolic places like Baghdad and Jerusalem.<sup>16</sup> As both Renton and Bar-Yosef contend, during the last two years of the war the British government actively promoted a propaganda campaign in the Middle East to draw attention to, and generate support for, future military action there, as well as to lay the ground for their own imperial intervention. This thesis develops the ideas and research of Bar-Yosef and Renton to some extent in that it too considers official propaganda during this period, but diverges by attempting a survey of the entirety of the war, taking a broader geographical perspective, and synthesizing official propaganda with associated fiction. It also looks more closely at the role of Mark Sykes as a propagandist. Inevitably, Sykes, author of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, is a familiar figure in the historiography of policy-making in the Middle East. He is also the subject of two biographies, and yet a comprehensive review of his role as a propagandist working in collaboration with Wellington House, the Foreign Office and India Office remains to be undertaken.<sup>17</sup>

Whilst this study considers the practical organisation of the undertaking, its primary aim is to understand what the propagandists said and wrote in order to

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<sup>16</sup> See Eitan Bar-Yosef, ‘The Last Crusade? British Propaganda and the Palestine Campaign, 1917-1918’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 36 (2001), pp. 87-109, Eitan Bar-Yosef, *The Holy Land in English Culture, 1799-1917* (Oxford, 2005) and James Renton, ‘Changing Languages of Empire and the Orient: Britain and the Invention of the Middle East, 1917-1918’, *The Historical Journal*, 50:3 (2007), pp. 645-667.

<sup>17</sup> Shane Leslie, *Mark Sykes: His Life and Letters* (London, 1923), a hagiography by his cousin, and Roger Adelson, *Mark Sykes: Portrait of an Amateur* (London, 1975), a substantial and scholarly work by an expert on the region.



better construct their contemporary cultural reality. In other words, it is less concerned with who shaped opinion, and how, than with why. It uses Ottoman-related propaganda to explore, in the words of John Horne, ‘the ideas and languages of wartime’ and participate in the discovery of ‘the meanings that contemporaries gave to the war’.<sup>18</sup> Of course, when the source material is propagandist literature, the historian must take into account that it was produced with a conscious intent to persuade or influence others. Only by grasping how they comprehended propaganda and what they sought to achieve with it, is it possible to attempt to interpret it. Philip Taylor explains the overwhelmingly pejorative understanding that the word connotes from the perspective of our modern information and communications age. It is ‘the enemy of independent thought and an intrusive and unwanted manipulator of the free flow of information and ideas .... a “dirty trick” utilized by “hidden persuaders”, “mind manipulators” and “brainwashers”’.<sup>19</sup> This emotive, and subjective, response was undoubtedly ignited in the aftermath of the war. Harold Lasswell and Arthur Ponsonby wrote damning accounts of wartime propaganda, particularly atrocity propaganda, in the late 1920s which, coinciding with the ‘disillusionment’ literature of the period, contributed to the idea of the public’s cynical exploitation by officialdom.<sup>20</sup> Recent work, on the other hand, has drawn attention to the possibility that this post-war response may also have been a reaction to the discomfiture felt at the hatred and belligerency that had been aroused on the Home Front during the war.<sup>21</sup> Such insights demonstrate the importance of moving away from a consideration of ‘good’ and ‘bad’

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<sup>18</sup> John Horne, ‘Public Opinion and Politics’ in John Horne (ed.), *A Companion to World War I* (Chichester, 2012), pp. 279-294, p.281.

<sup>19</sup> Taylor, p.1.

<sup>20</sup> See Harold D. Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in World War I* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971) (originally published as *Propaganda Technique in the World War* in 1927), Arthur Ponsonby, *Falsehood in Wartime* (Melbourne, 1980) (first published 1928) and J.D. Squires, *British Propaganda at Home and in The United States: From 1914 to 1917* (Cambridge, Mass., 1935). The assertion by American isolationists that they had been ‘duped’ by British propagandists into entering the war further tarnished its reputation, as did Hitler’s professed admiration of the British campaign in *Mein Kampf* and his use of the British model for the propagation of Nazi ideology.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Heather Jones, ‘As the Centenary Approaches: The Regeneration of First World War Historiography’, *The Historical Journal*, Volume 56, Issue 3, September 2013, pp.857-878, pp. 869-70.

propaganda, based on its effect, back to an understanding that sees it simply as the process by which officials sought to ‘persuade’ others to their point of view. Certainly, it was in such neutral terms that it was understood during the war.<sup>22</sup> As Taylor points out, ‘in the centuries before nuclear technology and psychology, before the likes of Einstein and Oppenheimer, of Freud and Jung, neither propaganda nor warfare had been demystified or discredited’.<sup>23</sup>

The use of propaganda as a tool for promoting imperialism in Victorian and Edwardian Britain is amply illustrated in John MacKenzie’s important work *Propaganda and Empire, The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960*, originally published in 1984.<sup>24</sup> Whilst MacKenzie pays scant attention to the war years themselves, his work offers valuable insights into how imperial propaganda contributed to the cultural norms of 1914-18. He posits that a dominant ideology existed in the British psyche consisting of ‘imperial nationalism, compounded by monarchism, militarism, and Social Darwinism, through which the British defined their own unique superiority *vis-à-vis* the rest of the world’ and that this ideology was transmitted via a range of communication media, including print culture, but also by the theatre, cinema, imperial societies and other devices.<sup>25</sup> Much communication media was overtly propagandist as it was produced with the conscious and deliberate aim of manipulating opinion, but promotion of the imperial message could be inadvertent, constituting instead ‘self-generating ethos reinforcement, a constant repetition of the central ideas and concerns of the age’, as opposed to propaganda.<sup>26</sup> Certainly, the full-blown Empire of the late nineteenth and early

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<sup>22</sup> The word originated in the context of the seventeenth-century Vatican’s efforts to defend the ‘true faith’ against the challenge of the Reformation. Even as late as 1911, according to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* the word was defined as ‘an activity relating largely to religious persuasion’ (See Taylor, p. 197).

<sup>23</sup> Taylor, p.9.

<sup>24</sup> John MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester, 1984).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p.253.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p.3.

twentieth century was a preoccupation of Edwardian Britain. Writing in 1911 historian, Ernest Barker, noted that ‘in England, of recent years, the term “Empire” and the conception of imperialism have become prominent and crucial’.<sup>27</sup> As Adam Tooze observes, ‘modern global imperialism was a radical and novel force, not an old-world hangover’ and comprehending it, justifying it and legitimising it at home and abroad were prevailing concerns.<sup>28</sup>

Many observers have noted with an element of bemusement that although the British propaganda effort was an exercise in improvisation it was also considered more successful and sophisticated than that of the other belligerents.<sup>29</sup> This may stem from a propensity to focus on propaganda in the Western-centric ways described above. By looking beyond matters such as mobilisation and morale, it is possible to see that Britain’s imperial past had ensured that she was far from uninitiated in the arts of propaganda when war broke out. Her long history of legitimising her imperial ambitions both at home and abroad were readily translated into the way in which she defined herself and justified her belligerency. By following this path, this thesis seeks to offer something new: to look at Britain’s wartime propaganda not as a phenomenon peculiar to the conflict but as part of a continuum, a dialogue of justification and legitimisation that was a component of her imperial story and continued into the war as a means of communicating who she was, why she fought and what she was entitled to.

### ***Empire and the First World War***

As will be discussed in Chapter One, for the purposes of propaganda, the war was perceived predominantly as a European war between civilised nations. Indeed, as Hew Strachan has written, the term ‘world war’ was largely

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<sup>27</sup> Ernest Barker, ‘Empire’ in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th Edition, Vol.9.

<sup>28</sup> Adam Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War and the Remaking of Global Order, 1916-1931* (London, 2014), p.20.

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, Sanders and Taylor, Chapter One.

understood to denote the importance of the war to European powers, rather than a statement about its geographical scale.<sup>30</sup> But the reality was that the war's reach and implications extended far beyond Europe, and not only because of, in the words of George Robb, 'fighting in overseas colonies and by colonial soldiers'.<sup>31</sup> Financial and commercial links also rendered the war's impact worldwide, as did the unique opportunity it provided for racial and cultural intermingling. Empire, of course, lay at the heart of the global nature of the war. The manpower and material resources of imperial territory drew soldiers and non-combatants, money and materials, into the conflict from across the world, whilst imperial ambitions determined the setting of many of the war's 'sideshows'.

For Britain, her small size and island status had always necessitated a bigger perspective.<sup>32</sup> With a pre-war population of around 45 million, she was able to mobilise approximately 6 million men during the war. Germany, with a population of almost 68 million, and a tradition of universal military service, mobilised 13 million. Only by relying on the Empire was Britain able to bolster her military might. The greatest contributor to her cause was India. 'While Britain prepared one expeditionary force in August [1914], India formed four – one each for Europe, Egypt, Mesopotamia and East Africa. India raised 1.4 million soldiers during the war, of which 1.1 million served outside the subcontinent'.<sup>33</sup> Over a million more troops came from the (white) dominions of Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa. In addition, hundreds of thousands of Indians, Africans, Chinese, and West Indians served in military labour units.

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<sup>30</sup> See Hew Strachan, 'The First World War as a Global War', *First World War Studies* 1, No.1 (2010), pp. 3-14, p.5.

<sup>31</sup> George Robb, *British Culture and the First World War* (Basingstoke, 2002), p.11.

<sup>32</sup> See Linda Colley, 'Size Does Matter', *The Times Literary Supplement*, September 20 2002, pp.12-14, p.12.

<sup>33</sup> Strachan, 'Global War', p.8.

The Empire might have given Britain her strength and global standing but it was potentially her Achilles heel. The British elite had been taught that the world's greatest territorial empire, Rome, had declined because of over-expansion, and they feared the extent of their own imperial reach. In the words of Robinson and Gallagher, in their seminal study of Victorian imperialism, the Empire had ceased to be a 'dynamic force and [was] becoming a static power' where officials were principally concerned with guarding and consolidating what had been won.<sup>34</sup> India remained the cardinal interest and, with its large Muslim population, pan-Islamism, and the threat of religiously driven resistance, was a potential destabiliser. Indeed, from the Indian Mutiny in 1857 onwards, this prospect was seen by many as the greatest potential source of danger to British rule. Whilst the Islamic world had always benefited from networks of scholars and mystics, growing numbers of Muslims performing the pilgrimage to Mecca along with the growth of the press, most significantly in India and Egypt, led to the formation of deeper connections with, and greater knowledge of, other Muslim societies. Such links were encouraged by scholars and used by the Ottoman sultan, Abdülhamid II (1876 to 1909), and his successors, the Young Turks, who, capitalising on the sultan's claim to be caliph, Prophet Mohammad's successor as the head of the community of Sunni Muslims, sought to cement the crumbling Ottoman Empire by identifying a common cause.

In an age where sovereignty was increasingly seen in the West as tied to ethnocultural identity (according to Reynolds, the term 'pan-Islam' was coined by Europeans, not Muslims), the logic of Muslim unity was a preoccupying concern.<sup>35</sup> Should Britain's Muslim subjects in India (but also in Zanzibar, Nigeria, Egypt, the Sudan, the Persian Gulf and the Malay States) put their faith in religion above their loyalty to the British imperial project, the Empire's future would be at stake. Paranoia regarding pan-Islam was such that, in the view of

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<sup>34</sup> Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians, The Official Mind of Imperialism* (London, 1961), p.470.

<sup>35</sup> Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, p.89.

Orientalist scholar, Maxime Rodinson, ‘a triumphant Europe saw all resistance to its domination as a sinister conspiracy .... [W]henver there was any show of anti-imperialism, even if it was a purely local reaction, pan-Islam was blamed’.<sup>36</sup> This was a recognition of the fact that Britain’s imperial power depended much less on coercion than it did on the co-operation of the colonised, and preservation of her reputation, her prestige, was perceived as critical to maintaining this. As Brown observes (in relation to the Raj, but it applies equally to the British Empire as a whole) ‘[it] was only as strong as it was thought to be; and consequently the British stood jealous guard over their prestige’.<sup>37</sup> Anything which undermined it weakened their power, and Islamic unity had the potential to do just that. In this context, it is unsurprising that war with Turkey was met with a degree of ambivalence and trepidation in November 1914. Fear of an Islamic uprising was compounded by the delicate matter of deploying Indian Muslims in a conflict against other Muslims under the authority of the Ottoman sultan-caliph. A disproportionate number of sepoys were Muslim and the vast majority were destined to fight in the Middle East.<sup>38</sup> The fact that Britain had allied herself with Russia, commonly perceived as Islam’s historic enemy, also exacerbated the situation. Furthermore, there remained a strong sense in many quarters, if not of kinship, then at least of respect for the Turks, who, as the power base behind the Ottoman Empire, had played an important role, if somewhat dormant in recent years, in maintaining the balance of power in Europe.

The potential of pan-Islam, and its corollary, jihad, as a unifying and galvanising force was not lost on the Central Powers. In the nineteenth century the Ottomans had a history of discriminate invocation of jihad and Enver Pasha (secular Young Turk and member of the CUP triumvirate) had seen its value as a mobilising

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<sup>36</sup> Maxime Rodinson, *Europe and the Mystique of Islam* (London, 1988), p.67.

<sup>37</sup> Brown, p.90.

<sup>38</sup> The Punjab contributed the largest number of sepoys to the Indian Army (producing 360,000 soldiers during the war). Around 40% of Punjabis were Muslim. During the course of the war 80% of Indian troops served in the Middle East (Rogan, p. 71).

force at first hand in 1911 when Libyan tribesmen joined the Turks in guerrilla warfare against the Italians, whilst many in German high command viewed Turkey's religious status as her greatest asset in the Central Powers' war effort.<sup>39</sup> Within the Ottoman Empire jihad could be used to cultivate loyalty and for military recruitment. Externally, Islamic revolt not only had the potential to distract and dilute the Entente's European war effort by opening up fronts elsewhere but held the prospect of furthering the Central Powers' own imperial ambitions at the expense of those of the Entente. Accordingly, on 14 November 1914 a call for holy war was read out in front of the Mosque of Mehmed the Conqueror in Constantinople appealing to Muslims throughout the world – not only within the Ottoman Empire but in India, North Africa, China, and elsewhere – to rise up against the Entente Powers, in other words, to commence a jihad.

In the event the call to jihad had a negligible effect as a means of inciting revolt within Entente imperial territory but Islam was nevertheless perceived by both sides as a potent weapon. As will be shown, whilst Britain did not respond to the Central Powers' invocation in kind, she nevertheless deployed Islam as a propaganda tool in subtler ways. Her self-proclaimed expertise in governing Muslims sensitively and respectfully was a means of demonstrating her fitness to rule as well as the superiority of her mode of civilisation. Religion also became a powerful means of undermining CUP prestige. With careful handling, labelling the Unionists as unbelievers – kafirs – enabled the condemnation of their actions and policies without risking the sensibilities of 'true' Muslims. Such an approach became increasingly valuable once the Ottoman Empire's dismantlement seemed a certainty and the Entente powers sought to scratch out their own claims to Ottoman Asia.

This study seeks to demonstrate that despite the damp squib that the Central Powers' jihad proved to be, the idea of it was nevertheless a prevailing and

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<sup>39</sup> Rogan, p.99.

enduring concern. Indeed, whilst the Ottomans' military potential was arguably never perceived as a serious threat, despite the setbacks in the Dardanelles and Mesopotamia, the ideological threat posed by the Ottomans' religious status was taken extremely seriously because of its potentially destructive effect on the Empire. Examining how Britain's propagandists navigated the difficult terrain that resulted from her status as an imperial power both dependent on her Muslim subjects but simultaneously at war with the holders of the caliphate enables a better understanding of the articulation of her imperial identity and ambitions and the means by which she managed the Empire during the war.

### *Empire and Culture*

Whilst on the one hand politicians and propagandists followed official policy they remained individuals, shaped by 'a particular set of ideas and cultural concepts, a *mentalité*'.<sup>40</sup> Accordingly, in the following chapters, the strategic concerns that determined particular propagandist responses are viewed in tandem with existing cultural norms to which Britain's imperial history, and the sense of self engendered by it, contributed. Relying again on the words of Robinson and Gallagher: 'strategy is not merely a reflection of the interests which it purports to defend, it is even more the register of the hopes, the memories and neuroses which inform the strategists' picture of the world'.<sup>41</sup> Strategy was informed by culture and culture was informed by empire. As Michael Howard observes, in pre-1914 Britain,

the books and newspapers of the period are full of references to the Imperial Race, the Island Race, the Island Breed, British stock, and so on, without a shadow of apology or even of self-consciousness. This was the way it was. The white man

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<sup>40</sup> Priya Satia, *Spies in Arabia: The Great War and the Cultural Foundations of Britain's Covert Empire in the Middle East* (Oxford, 2008), p.12.

<sup>41</sup> Robinson and Gallagher, p.470.



*was* superior to the dark-skinned man; a position which gave him privileges and responsibilities, rights and duties.<sup>42</sup>

This conviction in the superiority of Western civilisation, and in those who created it, is evident throughout the documents considered in this research, and Britain's imperial history, especially her nineteenth-century experience of conquest in Asia and Africa, clearly played an integral role in shaping her self-image. An initially tolerant approach to other races, particularly in India, had been gradually replaced by more doctrinally oriented attitudes as military successes reinforced 'race-consciousness' and a growing belief in the racial superiority of Western Europeans. Such attitudes were part of a general shift in attitude from the universalist ideology of the Enlightenment to a Eurocentric world view, where, as well as military prowess, economic, technical, political and cultural dominance led to an emphatic belief in Western superiority and a view of the East as stagnant and degraded. Social Darwinism fed such attitudes. As Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, the late nineteenth-century pro-Arab aristocrat and poet, observed, it presented a new world view where life was no longer an 'ordered harmony, but ... a struggle for existence where whatever right there was was on the side of might, and where it was a waste of pity to deplore the extinction of less capable races, either of beast or man, before the competition of their more capable rivals'.<sup>43</sup>

In explaining the psychology behind imperial rule, historian, Albert Hourani, observed that it necessarily involves taking up an attitude that includes both 'a kind of proprietary feeling towards those who lie in one's power' and 'a sense of superiority which is natural in the circumstances'.<sup>44</sup> For the Victorians, such national arrogance stemmed not only from a belief in their superior genes and civilisation but also from the fact that they identified a moral purpose to their

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<sup>42</sup> Michael Howard, *Empires, Nations and Wars* (Stroud, 2007), p.63.

<sup>43</sup> Quoted in Hourani, *Europe and the Middle East* (London, 1980), p.103.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.

enterprise, an endeavour to bring that civilisation to the less advanced. It was a self-perpetuating process whereby imperial success proved superiority, and superiority in turn justified intervention and control. These attitudes were, to a large extent, equally applicable to the other world powers. The United States, Russia, France and Germany thought and defined themselves in imperial terms, although they each followed their own distinctive path to global colonialism. World order, pre-1914, was based on assumptions regarding the right of Western powers to seek and maintain domination over the rest of the globe.

As Dominic Lieven contends, for the majority of Europeans ‘the concept of empire was a positive one’.<sup>45</sup> Those who diverged included the burgeoning socialist movement for whom imperialism was synonymous with territorial aggrandisement and hence morally wrong.<sup>46</sup> Other commentators, notably J.A. Hobson, argued that it did not make economic sense. Whereas ‘true colonialism’, a genuine expansion of nationality such as in Canada or New Zealand, was acceptable, imperialism, consisting of ‘a small minority wielding political or economic sway over a majority of alien and subject people, themselves under the despotic political control of the Imperial Government or its local nominees’ was not.<sup>47</sup> This ‘New Imperialism’ was bad for the subject races and for the imperialists whose own society stultified when its energies were consumed by imperial ambitions. Hobson, too, viewed the British Empire as ‘closely analogous’ with the Roman Empire, warning that ‘the laws which, operative throughout nature, doom the parasite to atrophy, decay, and final extinction, are not evaded by nations any more than by individual organisms’.<sup>48</sup> A fear of decay, lay not only at the heart of the imperial project but within British society more generally. Urbanisation, and the experience of the Second Boer

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<sup>45</sup> Dominic Lieven, *The Russian Empire and Its Rivals from the Sixteenth Century to the Present* (London, 2002), p.4.

<sup>46</sup> See Hew Strachan, *The First World War*, vol. I, *To Arms* (Oxford, 2001), Chapter Two.

<sup>47</sup> J.A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (London, 1902), pps. 4-5.

<sup>48</sup> Hobson, p.387-389.

War (1899-1902), had led to anxiety regarding the quality of Anglo-Saxon fighting stock.<sup>49</sup> Coupled with a sense of physical disintegration were the intellectual and ideological challenges posed by modernity. An increasingly industrialised, urban society with mass enfranchisement challenged the existing order, not only socially but spiritually as confidence in the deeply felt religious purpose of English Protestantism gave way to doubt and confusion in the face of such profound change.<sup>50</sup>

This dichotomy between arrogant entitlement on the one hand, and insecurity and uncertainty on the other, is pervasive in the documents scrutinised in this thesis. By recognising that the imperial experience was both a refraction of domestic concerns as well as an influence upon them (and vice versa), it is possible to endorse MacKenzie's assertion that imperialism created 'for the British a world view which was central to their perceptions of themselves'.<sup>51</sup> This, in turn, reflects an endorsement of an approach to studying 'world history' based not on an analysis of 'the walled-off tribe or nation, but the nexus of contact between peoples'.<sup>52</sup> British identity, like that of most peoples, was a consequence not of isolation but of interaction.

### ***Engaging with Orientalism and its legacy***

'A rich body of scholarship has already grown around "Orientalism", the ways Westerners define themselves in relation to an "Other." In this agenda for research, war is mostly in the background. Yet war is a potent site of Orientalism. In and through war, people formulate what it means to be Western

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<sup>49</sup> Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (London, 1996), p. 172.

<sup>50</sup> See, for example, Satia, p.85.

<sup>51</sup> MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p.2.

<sup>52</sup> Patrick Porter, *Military Orientalism: Eastern War Through Western Eyes* (London, 2009), p.191.

or non-Western'.<sup>53</sup> So writes Patrick Porter, author of *Military Orientalism: Eastern War Through Western Eyes*, in his valuable examination of the ways in which the West has sought to define and understand itself and its enemy by viewing conflict as a clash between 'the West and the Rest'. Like Porter's analysis, this research proceeds on the basis that Edward Said's *Orientalism*, first published in 1978, and the debate it stimulated offers a useful starting point for engaging with broader questions regarding the representation of the 'other' and the relationship of such representations to power.<sup>54</sup> Said's theory paid homage to the work of Michel Foucault whose central assertion, that objective truth is inaccessible and that knowledge is always the product of the social context in which it is produced, also has resonance in this thesis.<sup>55</sup> As Zachary Lockman summarises, 'who and what we are is not only shaped or influenced but produced, *constituted*, by socially prevalent systems of meaning'.<sup>56</sup> This is what Foucault referred to as 'discourse', an idea Said took and applied to the imperial experience in the East, arguing that the Western intellectual elite, including scholars, writers, artists, explorers and statesmen, created a discourse in which the Orient was 'known' to be degenerate, uncivilised, lazy and violent, in contrast to a vision of the West as morally, culturally and intellectually superior. He elaborated upon Foucault's theory by identifying a deliberate intent to shape knowledge with an identifiable objective, namely, to undermine the East as a means of legitimising the West's actions.

This study recognises an imperial discourse. Who and what Britain was in 1914-1918 was in part a product of it. But it was not a systematic or deliberate creation. The attribution of intent by Said assumes a coherence and consistency of thought that was lacking in the imperial project, which reacted to circumstance and context and, as shall be shown, was capable of an intricate response far

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<sup>53</sup> Porter, *Military Orientalism*, p.2.

<sup>54</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London, 2003).

<sup>55</sup> Said referred to Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969) and *Discipline and Punish* (1975).

<sup>56</sup> Lockman, p.186.

exceeding a simple East versus West dichotomy. Said's idea of a culturally static Oriental 'other' also requires revision in the context of this study. For example, during the war cultural preconceptions which had been applied to Islam and the East were turned on the Germans who, from the outset of the war, were the primary focus against whom Britons sought to identify themselves. Thus, while imperial Britain may have had well-developed ideas about the inferiority of non-white races, it became expedient to put such ideas to one side and instead focus on deconstructing fellow Europeans. Propped up by the perceived scientific validity of eugenics, which could as readily be applied to Europeans as to other races, the Germans were depicted as boorish, primitive, fanatically militaristic, immoral and atavistic. 'In one explicitly racist formulation, the Germans were referred to as the "Zulus of Europe"'.<sup>57</sup> Germans became the 'other', in opposition to civilised, democratised Britons, just as, in the nineteenth century, Africans and Asians had been depicted as inferior to Europeans as a means of justifying imperial expansion. In the early stages of the war there was little room for another enemy, specifically for an Islamic 'other' in the form of the Turks. Even Jews were an easier target than Muslims; anti-semitism was rife in Britain during the war but the Ottomans were a remoter entity. Indeed, as will be shown, there was concern amongst official circles during the war at the apparent regard in which the Turks continued to be held within British society.

This is not to say that the war years are a barren period for considering the conflict between East and West, far from it. The lack of anti-Turkish sentiment in the early part of the war is as telling of the flexibility of cultural assumptions as is the subsequent alacrity with which the British wholeheartedly reverted to traditional stereotypes in its later stages. Equally, the imperative in the second half of the war to differentiate Turks from Arabs and Indian Muslims called for a sophisticated, tightly controlled approach, beyond crude racism and cliché. By examining how and why Britain constructed Ottoman Asia and its peoples during

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<sup>57</sup> Robb, p.7.

the war, this thesis engages with the legacy of *Orientalism* and attempts to illustrate the fluidity and complexity of the relationship between East and West.

### ***Print Culture***

In her introduction to *Media and the British Empire* Chandrika Kaul discusses the concept of ‘communication media’ which she identifies as including electric telegraphs, news agencies, newspapers, books and printed ephemera, photographs and cinema.<sup>58</sup> Communication media did not just convey traditional news. They were also vital to the transmission of notions of identity, race and culture, and in the context of Britain’s imperial experience, it was the primary means, aside from firsthand experience, by which the metropole’s encounter with the colonised was shaped. Empire was, in the words of Elleke Boehmer, ‘itself, at least in part, a textual exercise .... conceived and maintained in an array of writings’.<sup>59</sup> As alluded to above, British rule depended on more than successful administration or military might. The articulation of who they were and what they stood for was essential to the sustenance of British power. Contemporaries frequently understood and referred to this as Britain’s ‘prestige’, which constituted ‘both the cement which supported the foundation of their rule and the ideology which they used to explain their superiority over the millions of people they ruled’.<sup>60</sup>

By focusing on printed material, predominantly books, pamphlets and illustrated magazines, this study explores the functional purpose of communication media in both the exposition and legitimisation of empire and of Britain’s belligerency during the war, and indeed, the interconnection between the two. The inclusion of fiction is, in part, a recognition of the importance of such cultural

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<sup>58</sup> Chandrika Kaul, *Media and the British Empire* (Basingstoke, 2006), p.2.

<sup>59</sup> Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature, Migrant Metaphors* (Second Edition) (Oxford, 2005), p.14.

<sup>60</sup> David French, ‘The Dardanelles, Mecca and Kut: Prestige as a Factor in British Eastern Strategy, 1914-1916’, *War and Society*, Vol.5, No.1, pp.45-61 (1987), p.46.

representations in perpetuating imperial relations. Spearheaded by Said's *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*, a number of scholars have used fictional prose and poetry to explore the process of colonisation.<sup>61</sup> Of particular assistance in this study has been Priya Satia's *Spies in Arabia*, an examination of the 'cultural actors' who shaped knowledge of the Middle East in Edwardian society through their fiction, travel writing and official correspondence. As Satia undertakes in relation to the work of British intelligence experts in the Middle East, so this thesis seeks to understand the ideas and cultural concepts that determined the propagandists' representations of Ottoman Asia during the war.

Whilst there have been many valuable contributions on the subject of empire writing during the period of the long nineteenth century, Satia's is unusual in its wartime focus.<sup>62</sup> The trauma of trench warfare, the horror of shell shock, the scale of loss; these are the tropes that captured, and continue to hold, the imagination.<sup>63</sup> In recent years, however, a growing recognition has arisen of the diversity of literary expression and the value of such sources to historians seeking to look beyond the narratives of high culture, and at elements of the war less examined.<sup>64</sup> As shall be seen in Chapter Five, popular literature offers valuable source material for examining the way in which Ottoman Asia and its peoples were constructed during the war era. The relevance of such work lies in both subject matter and in the proximity of many writers to official circles. A number of writers who engaged with Eastern themes in their fiction, such as Arthur Conan Doyle, Rudyard Kipling, William Le Queux, John Buchan and

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<sup>61</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London, 1993).

<sup>62</sup> Overviews include, for example, Elleke Boehmer, *Migrant Metaphors*; Douglas Kerr, *Eastern Figures, Orient and Empire in British Writing* (Hong Kong, 2008); and, Robin W. Winks and James R. Rush eds. *Asia in Western Fiction* (Manchester, 1990).

<sup>63</sup> See, for example, Trudi Tate 'The First World War: British Writing' in Kate McLoughlin (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to War Writing* (Cambridge, 2009), pp.160-174, which contains not a single mention of Turkey or the Ottoman Empire or any literature connected thereto.

<sup>64</sup> See, for example, Mary Hammond, *Reading, Publishing and the Formation of Literary Taste in England, 1880-1914* (Aldershot, 2006) and Mary Hammond and Shafquat Towheed (eds.), *Publishing in the First World War: Essays in Book History* (Basingstoke, 2007).

Gilbert Parker, were also directly engaged in producing material for Wellington House.

Whilst the wartime experiences of prominent figures such as Kipling and Buchan have been scrutinised closely by historians in the intervening century, it is surprising, given their intimate association with imperial matters, that the relationship between their wartime propaganda and the British imperial agenda during the war has seemed less deserving of attention. In particular, Buchan, whose novel *Greenmantle* can be read as a key text in the dissemination of Britain's wartime imperial ideology, is the subject of a number of biographies, articles and essays, many of which address his role within Wellington House and as a propagandist, but few give anything more than a cursory reference to the novel.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, Kipling's attitude towards Germany, and his anti-German propaganda work such as *Mary Postgate*, have benefited from a great deal of scholarly attention, whereas his epistollic propaganda piece *The Eyes of Asia*, concerned with how Muslim soldiers from the Empire responded to the experience of the Western Front, has not.<sup>66</sup> Another writer, Marmaduke Pickthall, is also under-studied in the context of his wartime writing on Ottoman Asia. Although little known today, he was a popular novelist in Edwardian England and highly regarded as an expert on the region. Chapter Four uses his

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<sup>65</sup> John Buchan, *Greenmantle* (London, 2007). Chapter Five contains a fuller account of scholarship on Buchan. An instructive example, is Kate Macdonald's chapter 'Translating Propaganda: John Buchan's Writing During the First World War' in Hammond and Towheed, pp.181-201. Macdonald refers to Buchan's depiction of Germans and of the British General Staff but makes no reference to his depictions of Turkey, Islam or the Turks. An exception is the work of al-Rawi (Ahmed al-Rawi, 'Islam and the East in John Buchan's Novels' in Kate Macdonald (ed.) *Reassessing John Buchan: Beyond the Thirty-Nine Steps* (London, 2009), pp.117-128, and Ahmed Al-Rawi, 'Buchan the Orientalist: Greenmantle and Western Views of the East', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, Vol. 10, Number 2 (2009) at [http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal\\_of\\_colonialism\\_and\\_colonial\\_history/v010/10.2.al-rawi.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_colonialism_and_colonial_history/v010/10.2.al-rawi.html): accessed 24/06/2015) but this thesis takes issue with al-Rawi's approach. See Chapter Five.

<sup>66</sup> Rudyard Kipling, *The Eyes of Asia* (New York, 1918). See, for example, David Bradshaw, 'Kipling and War' in Howard J. Booth (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Rudyard Kipling* (Cambridge, 2011), pp.80-94, which takes an entirely Eurocentric approach by considering his anti-German propaganda, his reaction to the death of his son at Loos, and his work for the Imperial War Graves Commission. The same goes for Hugh Brogan's chapter, 'The Great War and Rudyard Kipling' in Jan Montefiore (ed.) *In Time's Eye* (Manchester, 2013), pp.73-90. See, however, Anurag Jain's unpublished thesis, *The Relationship between Ford, Kipling, Conan Doyle, Wells and British Propaganda of the First World War* (Queen Mary, London, 2009).



journalism and novels to explore his position as astute and trenchant critic of Wellington House's Eastern propaganda.

## **Methods and Structure**

### ***Chapter One – Propaganda Production at Wellington House, 1914-1916***

This chapter takes as its focus the material produced by the War Propaganda Bureau (commonly referred to as Wellington House, the location of the Bureau's offices) between the start of the war and the end of 1916. Chapter Two takes a similar approach in relation to the latter half of the war. Whilst there were a number of other propaganda organisations within the government, Wellington House was, in the words of Philip Taylor, 'the single most important branch of the British propaganda organization between 1914 and 1917'.<sup>67</sup> It was tasked with conveying Britain's position on the war to allied and neutral countries, and it did so in close collaboration with the Foreign Office. As will be explained, it was to Wellington House that responsibility for propaganda relating to Ottoman Asia and other countries with a Muslim population fell. This was, however, an evolutionary process, and it was only in 1916 that a clearly defined remit began to emerge.

The primary source material for this chapter consists of pamphlets, books, government documents (such as the Blue Book) and illustrated newspapers produced by or on behalf of Wellington House. These, and not the popular press, were the means by which the propagandists believed they could most effectively convey their message. The importance of mass popular opinion had, in 1914, yet to be fully appreciated, and officials still considered that influencing opinion-makers was more effective than directly influencing public opinion. Sir Claude Schuster expressed a commonly held view when he observed, in December 1914,

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<sup>67</sup> Taylor, p.177.

that ‘it is better to influence those who can influence others than to attempt a direct appeal to the mass of the population’.<sup>68</sup> Consequently, Wellington House employed authors and academics to produce pamphlets and books – often amounting to several hundred pages – that veered towards the scholarly and dry. The exception to this approach was in the production of illustrated papers. As Chapters One and Two will show, *al-Haqīqah*, a paper produced expressly for Muslims, was aimed precisely at popular (Muslim) opinion. It was an important part of Wellington House’s Muslim propaganda and is a valuable and previously untapped resource for understanding preconceptions regarding Muslims as well as how officials sought to influence them in the interests of strategic concerns relating to the war and the Empire.

Any review of Wellington House’s practices is circumscribed by its covert operational methods and the paucity of original documents relating to its organisation. Shortly after the war, the bulk of its records were destroyed including all policy papers and the whole contents of its Record Department library.<sup>69</sup> What did survive includes a ‘Schedule of Wellington House Literature’, containing a substantive list of pamphlets and books produced during the war. Whilst not exhaustive, the Schedule is a valuable way of identifying propaganda material, and most of the wartime pamphlets and books referred to in this thesis appear in it.<sup>70</sup> Other important sources are three reports produced by Wellington House on their activities between June 1915 and September 1916. Whilst this method of reporting ceased with the third report, papers relating to two investigations into Wellington House’s activities in 1917, conducted by Robert Donald on behalf of the government, enable an appreciation of its work during that year, and there is sufficient archival material, predominantly in

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<sup>68</sup> Schuster to Robinson, 3 December 1914, TNA INF 4/1B.

<sup>69</sup> See ‘The Activities of Wellington House during the Great War 1914-18’ (undated) TNA INF 4/1B. And, Michael Redley, ‘Origins of the Problem of Trust: Propaganda during the First World War’ in Vian Bakir and David M. Barlow eds., *Communication in the Age of Suspicion: Trust and the Media* (Basingstoke, 2007), pp.27-38, p.37.

<sup>70</sup> An analysis of the Schedule of Literature is contained in the Table on page 93.

Foreign Office and India Office papers, to supplement what remains from Wellington House itself. As will be shown, these sources indicate that in the period 1914-16 the provision of propaganda concerning Britain's war with the Ottoman Empire was not a priority. For example, between November 1914 and September 1916, during which period approximately four hundred books and pamphlets were distributed in up to seventeen European languages, only one pamphlet was translated into Turkish and only three into Arabic.<sup>71</sup> Instead, it is largely by considering material written for Wellington House's target audience, namely 'allied and neutral' countries, that it is possible to chart representations in the first half of the war. This target audience reflected the overriding official motivation for the propaganda campaign, which was to communicate and justify Britain's role in the war. In the second half of the war, they sought to influence those same recipients in support of their ongoing belligerency and their post-war ambitions. Part of this process meant elaborating upon Britain's role as an imperial power, deeply familiar with governing subject races, including Muslims. They claimed a special relationship with, and a special knowledge of, Muslims based on experience in India and Egypt, and it was largely in this context that Ottoman Asia and its peoples were depicted.

Concerns regarding the impact of the war with the Ottomans on the British Empire's Muslim subjects and soldiers, in particular the potential damage to prestige and the prospect of religiously motivated revolt, and the effects of the destabilisation of the traditional balance of power within Europe, contributed towards an initial period of stasis in relation to propaganda specifically aimed at 'the East and Among Moslems generally'.<sup>72</sup> Fear and lack of direction were compounded by an overwhelming preoccupation with understanding, explaining and justifying Britain's war with a fellow European nation. As will be shown, it

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<sup>71</sup> See 'Third Report on the Work Conducted for the Government at Wellington House', September 1916, IWM 49/3(41).01, ('Third Report').

<sup>72</sup> Second Report on the Work Conducted for the Government at Wellington House, 1 February 1916, IWM 49/3(41).01, ('Second Report'), Section 12, p.90-91.

was only in 1916, in light of military failures in the Dardanelles and Mesopotamia and events in Armenia and the Middle East, that a more decisive approach began to emerge.

## ***Chapter Two – Propaganda Production at Wellington House, 1917-1918***

This chapter takes a similar approach to Chapter One but focuses primarily on Turkey, leaving the Middle East for Chapter Three. By the onset of Lloyd George's government, the official position regarding the Ottoman Empire's future had crystallised. Woodrow Wilson's enquiry to the belligerents in December 1916, in which he asked them to state their peace terms, proved to be the catalyst for Lloyd George to state definitively that Britain was opposed to the continuation of the Ottoman state in its current form and to condemn its methods of government as a 'murderous tyranny'.<sup>73</sup> Thereafter, Lloyd George himself was instrumental in launching a new campaign within Wellington House whose purpose was, in the words of John Buchan, 'to make it a platitude among Allies and neutrals' that the Turk must go.<sup>74</sup>

In 1917 and 1918 the propagandists took a new tack, one which resulted not only in a great deal more activity but which also became more complex as Britain sought to prepare the ground for the Ottoman Empire's dismantlement and the staking of her own claim to the Empire's former territories, whilst continuing to manage the sensitivities of the Empire's Muslim population and address matters of prestige. Part of this process involved adopting and running with Wilson's wartime rhetoric of self-determination and nationalism, but, in turn, this necessitated a reshaping of Britain's imperial identity for external consumption. The benefits of the British mode of imperialism were articulated not only in pamphlets and books aimed at allies and neutrals, which naturally also decried

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<sup>73</sup> Cited in Anon., *The Ottoman Domination* (reprinted from *The Round Table*) (London, 1917), p.3.

<sup>74</sup> Buchan to Montgomery, 28 March 1917, TNA FO 395/139/64927.

the Turkish and German versions, but in the illustrated papers aimed at Muslims. Despite the apparent failure of the Central Powers' efforts to incite a jihad and the reversal of the Entente's military fortunes in the Middle East, Wellington House continued to produce *al-Haqīqah*, and implemented additional papers aimed at Muslims, suggesting that both prestige and jihad remained prevailing concerns until the end of the war.

### ***Chapter Three – Mark Sykes and Middle Eastern Propaganda***

Mark Sykes's role in the 'Turk Must Go' campaign forms part of Chapter Two. This chapter explores his role in Middle Eastern propaganda but places it in the context of his wartime trajectory from novice MP and amateur Orientalist to government authority on Eastern policy and Eastern propaganda. Sykes identified, as early as October 1915, the need for propaganda connected with Ottoman Asia. He took a more bullish approach than either Whitehall or Delhi when it came to managing the sensitivities of the Empire's Muslim subjects, believing Britain should be unapologetic regarding her war with the Ottomans. Instrumental in establishing the 'Eastern Propaganda' element within Wellington House, and in the creation of *al-Haqīqah*, by mid-1916, with the completion of the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the inception of the Arab Revolt, he also began, virtually singlehandedly, to implement a pro-Arab propagandist strategy. For the rest of the war, he remained a primary protagonist in a propaganda campaign that supported the Ottoman Empire's minority peoples, including the Armenians and Jews, as well as the Arabs. Extensive use is made of his personal papers as well as the pamphlets and newspaper articles he produced, his commentary for the War Committee's Arabian Reports and his parliamentary speeches, to trace the nature and development of this element of the government's propaganda campaign.

Charming and witty, but equally arrogant and naïve, Sykes is usually dismissed as, at best, an amateur with a cavalier attitude to the people whose future lay in his hands, at worst, as a cynical manipulator prepared to go to any lengths to further British imperial interests. This chapter seeks to go beyond the usual responses to Sykes and undertake instead a comprehensive review of how he set about shaping and implementing Britain's Middle Eastern propaganda campaign. Examining his perspective in this chapter is a recognition not only of his importance in shaping Middle Eastern propaganda but of the need, in this case, to delve beyond official papers and understand the man himself, with all his traits and foibles. Indeed, the assertion that 'policy is fragile to the touch of individuality, and the peculiar influence of each new-comer has to be reckoned' is one that holds particularly true in relation to Sykes and the Middle East.<sup>75</sup> However, Sykes, like other protagonists in this thesis such as John Buchan, Charles Masterman, Arnold Toynbee, Marmaduke Pickthall and Aubrey Herbert, whilst an individual with his own ideas and agendas, was also a member of a dominant social group with a remarkably consistent set of shared ideals. By examining Sykes – his beliefs, his preoccupations, his neuroses – it is possible to gain not only a clearer picture of the development of Britain's Middle Eastern propaganda but of the collective cultural mentality of decision makers in the pre-war period and during it.

#### ***Chapter Four – Marmaduke Pickthall: The Dissenter's Perspective***

In the preceding paragraph the ideological homogeneity of the social and political ruling class during the war was asserted. Indeed, the enlistment of established writers and academics by Wellington House is frequently proffered in the historiography of the war as evidence of this cohesion.<sup>76</sup> They had a shared

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<sup>75</sup> Robinson and Gallagher, p.25.

<sup>76</sup> See, for example, Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (London, 1990), p.27 and Stuart Wallace, *War and the Image of Germany: British Academics 1914-1918* (Edinburgh, 1988), p.199.

vision of the world and Britain's place within it. They believed that peace, democracy and progress could best be achieved through growth of the British form of civilisation. So, too, did Marmaduke Pickthall, a well-known novelist, journalist and Orientalist, but where he diverged was in relation to Britain's policy towards Turkey and Islam. Although ambivalence about war with the Ottomans was not uncommon, Pickthall appears to have stood alone in providing an incisive critique not only of British policy but more specifically of Britain's Eastern propaganda, taking issue with the work of both Sykes and Toynbee. With friends in high places, including Lord Cromer and Aubrey Herbert, and in-depth knowledge of the region, his was a powerful and unique voice, and one that was feared by the authorities to the extent that in 1917 his prosecution under the Defence of the Realm Act was contemplated. Using his published novels and journalism, Chapter Four will consider the dissenter's view by examining Pickthall's writing both in terms of his response to official propaganda and, more broadly, in relation to his divergence from established wartime views regarding the Ottoman Empire and Islam, and Britain's relationship with them.

### ***Chapter Five – Fiction and Ottoman Asia***

Wellington House called on the nation's novelists, many of whom were already deeply engaged in a dialectic concerning British identity and also possessed a keenly developed sense of the didactic. Chapter Five starts by reflecting on the pre-war predilection for Eastern-based fiction and contextualises it within Edwardian society. Whilst its popularity lay in its exoticism and romance (and frequently in the comfort of the familiar as the same old tropes were rehashed time and again), such fiction was simultaneously a conduit for contemplation of a multitude of contemporary issues and concerns. Political, social and spiritual anxieties were reflected in topics such as pan-Islamism, Islamic fanaticism, the existential and invigorating appeal of primitive cultures, the virility of the 'Mohammedan' and his attractiveness to English women, as well as in more

overt and traditional subjects such as the merits of the imperial project and the future of the Empire.

Chapter Five then turns to the war years themselves, contending that, as in official propaganda, the centrality of the ‘Hun’ to Britain’s wartime psyche resulted in a loss of interest in a Muslim oppositional figure. Even in *Greenmantle*, a wartime novel set largely in Turkey and concerning a plot to ignite a jihad against the Allies, the primary enemy is manifestly Germany. However, this chapter will show that although Germany was the ‘other’ against whom Britain defined herself in the war, *Greenmantle* is a crucial source for this thesis capturing not only prevailing strategic concerns but also the essence of the propagandist message Britain sought to convey to the world in the summer of 1916, revealing much about both her self-perception as well as the ways in which she defined and understood others. It will also consider Kipling’s propagandist piece, *The Eyes of Asia*, which, although it concerns Indian Muslims, in the context of certain India Office papers, offers a valuable insight into how official propagandists sought to represent Muslim soldiers and their relationship with their colonial masters for broader consumption.

Finally, this chapter will offer some insights into the notable resurgence of a subtly changed Eastern romantic trope immediately after the war and suggest how the events of the war and the work of the propagandists may have influenced the ways in which Muslims and Ottoman Asia were represented.



Whilst wartime propaganda has received a reasonable level of attention from historians, it is contended that a comprehensive review of how propagandists wrote about Ottoman Asia remains to be undertaken. Approaching the investigation from the perspective of Britain’s imperial status enables an analysis



in which it is possible to discern how propagandist writing formed part of an existing discursive framework regarding the purpose and legitimacy of the British Empire which meshed in the war years with Britain's justification of her belligerency. Within this bigger picture, the propagandists' response to war with the Ottomans was determined by two principal objectives: to project an image of British imperialism as tolerant, progressive and nurturing across the globe and to retain the sympathy and support of the British Empire's own Muslim subjects. These objectives were the bedrock upon which it was believed the safety and security of the Empire could be assured during the war and after. The following chapters will show how they were pursued and how their pursuit was circumscribed, in particular by Turkey's status as the cynosure of the Islamic world. As alluded to above, anxiety dogged the imperial project, and never more so than in the shape of pan-Islam and Islamic fanaticism. Despite growing confidence in the support of her imperial subjects for the Entente's cause, and the failure of the Central Powers' call to jihad, unease remained pervasive throughout the war. Islamic fanaticism, like German militarism, underlined not just the Empire's vulnerability but a sense of uncertainty within British cultural identity more generally, wrought by the seismic changes of the era. This point highlights the overarching purpose of the thesis which is to demonstrate how narration of the progression of propagandist constructions of Ottoman Asia enables a better understanding not only of the mutability and complexity of the response to Muslims and the East but also how Britain defined herself, not simply as belligerent, but more, fundamentally as a global power, an imperial power with both a past to be defended and a future to be secured.

## **Chapter One – Wellington House, 1914-1916**

This chapter will consider Wellington House's propaganda output from the onset of the war until the end of 1916 and fall of Asquith's government. It will begin by giving some background on the propaganda machinery during the first half of the war before providing a short examination of the way in which Germany was depicted, on the grounds that depiction of the Ottomans can only be understood in conjunction with an awareness of how their ally, and 'ring leader', was depicted. Equally important is an understanding of the way that Britons perceived themselves in contrast to the Central Powers. As suggested in the Introduction, Britain's imperial psyche played a critical role in determining her self-perception and section 1.3 will develop this idea. Sections 1.4 to 1.6 turn to a more in-depth analysis of the material relating specifically to the Ottoman Empire, starting with the early material relating to the outbreak of hostilities and encompassing the Dardanelles and Mesopotamia campaigns. Section 1.5 centres on the preoccupation during the early part of the war with the maintenance of British 'prestige' which, it will be argued, was the most important aspect of their Muslim-related propaganda during the first half of the war. Finally, in section 1.6, Wellington House's careful response to the Armenian massacres will be examined, and it will be shown that official willingness to condemn them was circumscribed by larger strategic concerns. Indeed, as the chronological period covered by this chapter drew to a close, those concerns resulted in the crystallising of Whitehall's policy towards the Ottomans and, as will be shown, new modes of representation began to emerge.

### ***1.1 The Evolution of Wellington House***

In contrast to the 'small wars' that preceded it, the First World War witnessed war on a new scale affecting all aspects of life and society. Not only did it have a personal, physical, effect on everyone but it challenged values and ideological

assumptions that lay at the heart of what it meant to be British. It was soon recognised that successful propaganda was a vital ingredient, not only to maintain morale and co-opt allies, but also to control and manipulate public opinion, without which the war effort could not be sustained. The challenge of producing effective propaganda took place in a new communications era, stimulated by factors such as increased literacy, mass readership of newspapers, the global cable network enabling the rapid transmission of information, the growing ubiquity of photography, and the dawn of the age of cinema. According to Sanders and Taylor, Britain was the most astute, sophisticated and adept of all the belligerents at harnessing these new channels of communication and effectively conveying their propagandist message. They were responsible ‘for opening a Pandoran box which unleashed the weapon of propaganda upon the modern world’.<sup>1</sup>

One of the first bodies to be formally set up, in August 1914, was the Press Bureau, designed to undertake press censorship. A number of other bodies also addressed propagandist matters (and frequently overlapped in the manner in which they did so) including the Neutral Press Committee (supplying information relating to the war to neutral countries), the Foreign Office News Desk (providing statements concerning foreign policy to the press, for example, via Reuters) and the War Office’s MI7 (military affairs), and yet it was felt that there was still a need for a body directly tasked with counteracting German propaganda in foreign countries, especially the US and the Dominions, and with presenting the ‘allied case and Great Britain’s share in the war in the proper light’.<sup>2</sup> The possibility of directing a psychological offensive at the enemy had yet to develop and was not fully addressed until the creation of the Enemy Propaganda Department in 1918. More immediately, Whitehall wished to counteract a manifesto published by prominent German academics in support of

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<sup>1</sup> Sanders and Taylor, p.1.

<sup>2</sup> ‘The News Department of the Foreign Office, August 1914-January 1916’, p.1, IWM 49/3 (41).0.

the invasion of Belgium. To address the task, C.F.G. Masterman, a cabinet minister, was appointed chief of Britain's War Propaganda Bureau with offices in Wellington House, Buckingham Gate. He immediately called a meeting of twenty-five authors and academics to discuss the ways in which they could contribute. This group, which included H.G. Wells, Arthur Conan Doyle, J.M. Barrie, John Galsworthy, Thomas Hardy, Gilbert Murray, A.E.W. Mason and Rudyard Kipling, was to have a sustained influence on war propaganda in the years to follow.<sup>3</sup> On 7 September, Masterman called a second meeting. The attendees this time were publicists and members of the press although newspaper proprietors were not included: 'the power he wanted to harness was in the wordsmiths, not in their business sponsors'.<sup>4</sup>

There was no radio, television or social media to challenge the authority of these 'wordsmiths' and, in the absence of competition, writers enjoyed a level of prestige unimaginable today. 'Not only through their writings, but also through the earnings they amassed, the access they were given to the social networks of the politically and economically powerful, and the letter-writing correspondence they maintained with numerous loyal readers, these men were as influential a group of writers as the world has ever produced'.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, their supposed neutrality, untarnished by political affiliation, attached to them an aura of sincerity, creating a sense that, in the words of Stefan Zweig, 'a writer could be trusted as the best guarantor of independent opinion'.<sup>6</sup>

As outlined in the Introduction, the prime target of Wellington House's propaganda effort was her allies and neutrals, particularly the Americans, and it

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<sup>3</sup> The average age of the authors called to Masterman's initial meeting was just over fifty. This was possibly another reason for the pejorative post-war reputation of the propaganda effort. Hynes points out that the propagandists' perceived hypocrisy in advocating a war they themselves were too old to fight in helped alienate the young in the war's aftermath (see Hynes, *A War Imagined*, p.26).

<sup>4</sup> Messinger, p.37.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.35.

<sup>6</sup> S. Zweig, *The World of Yesterday* (London, 2009), p.264.

was largely in this context that the Ottoman Empire was represented. In Masterman's first account of Wellington House's activities, dated 7 June 1915, a need for a concerted approach towards propaganda targeting Muslims, or to counteract Turkey's popular image within Britain, had yet to be identified. There was only one small reference to the Muslim world, which stated: 'Arabic, Turkish, and Chinese translations have ... been made of some of our publications and distributed by steamship companies and local representatives of the Foreign Office, Colonial Office, and India Office, in appropriate quarters'.<sup>7</sup> With regards to India, the report stated 'we have left the question of propaganda entirely in the hands of the Government of India'.<sup>8</sup>

Whilst America was the primary target of Wellington House's propaganda, the concern was less about persuading them to join the Allies than to ensure they did not join the Central Powers. Yet contrasting Germany with Britain required careful negotiation of American sensibilities. Lord Robert Cecil of the Foreign Office observed that, 'Our national habit of self-depreciation is a handicap. Moreover, in many countries we are suspected of arrogance, and the most moderate criticism of foreign countries is, for this and other reasons, bitterly resented'.<sup>9</sup> The aim, therefore, was to be as subtle and indirect as possible whilst simultaneously conveying a strong sense of British values and purpose, often relying on her history and imperial past to do so. The covert approach entailed going to great lengths to hide the official origins of their material. As John Buchan put it in 1917, 'Camouflage of the right kind is a vital necessity. It [i.e. propaganda] can advertise its wares, but it dare not advertise the vendor'.<sup>10</sup> This was perceived as the antithesis of the overt, heavy-handed, German approach

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<sup>7</sup> First Report on Wellington House, 7 June 1915, p.31, TNA INF 4/5 ('First Report'). As stated in the Introduction, only three pamphlets were translated into Arabic and only one into Turkish between the start of the war and September 1916.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> 'British Propaganda in Allied and Neutral Countries' by Robert Cecil, January 1917, TNA INF 4/1B.

<sup>10</sup> 'Report on the structure and work of The Department of Information' by John Buchan, 1 December 1917, TNA FO 395/235/5619.

which was seen to have failed in the US because, rather than gaining sympathy, it had simply alerted the Americans against efforts by foreign powers to manipulate their allegiances. In a report of September 1916, Wellington House proudly stated that:

In the method of distribution we have endeavoured as far as possible to avoid that promiscuous and obviously Government-inspired deluging with literature upon all persons alike, whether they desire it or otherwise, which has distinguished the German methods, and which has excited both indignation and weariness among the recipients. Practically all our literature bears the mark of some printer or publisher, and there is nothing to trace it to any Government origin.<sup>11</sup>

The methods adopted by Gilbert Parker, a Canadian novelist and MP for Gravesend, with responsibility for American propaganda until mid-1916, were typical of Wellington House's style. Pamphlets and books, produced by commercial printers and publishers, would be sent by him, as a purportedly 'concerned bystander', directly to Americans he considered to be influential. Parker used compliment slips with his private address printed on them, or wrote personalised notes to accompany the publications, a method he called the 'policy of the personal approach'.<sup>12</sup>

Some literature was written by employees within Wellington House, some was commissioned by them and written by third parties, and on occasion they would identify and purchase bulk copies of material already in the public domain which they considered would make good propaganda. The deals were generally struck by Alexander Watt, Wellington House's 'business adviser' and one of London's leading literary agents, who also happened to represent many of Wellington House's most prominent authors including Kipling, Conan Doyle, Gilbert Parker

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<sup>11</sup> Third Report, p.6.

<sup>12</sup> P.T. Scott, 'The Secrets of Wellington House: British Covert Propaganda 1914-1918', *Antiquarian Book Monthly*, August/September 1996, pp.12-15, p.14.

and Buchan.<sup>13</sup> It was a small, and incestuous, world. The publishing house on whom Wellington House relied most heavily was Hodder & Stoughton, whose authors included not only many of Alexander Watt's clients, but also many prominent political figures, including Grey, Churchill and Balfour. When Wellington House began publishing material directly in America, they frequently used George Doran, a publisher whose business was one-third owned by Hodder.<sup>14</sup> Ernest Hodder's publishing services during the war were so extensive, they earned him a knighthood in 1919.

By June 1915, it was reported by Wellington House that two and a half million copies of books, pamphlets and other forms of literary propaganda had been circulated in seventeen different languages since the outbreak of war.<sup>15</sup> In 1916 their output was even more impressive and yet, during this period, only four pamphlets were published on Britain's war with Turkey, and only one in relation to the Middle East. Furthermore, until November 1916, and the publication of the Blue Book, only one pamphlet was published on the Armenian atrocities despite the fact that they had largely taken place a year and a half earlier in the spring of 1915.<sup>16</sup> In contrast, as the Table on page 93 demonstrates, over the same period more than one hundred and fifty pamphlets and books were produced on the causes of the war and on atrocities committed by the Central Powers within Europe. As this chapter will show, in the first half of the war, Germany was almost exclusively the object of the propagandists' attention. However, how they wrote about Germany, and about Britain in comparison, particularly when they used the past to demonstrate the righteousness of her cause, the propagandists had much to say about empire, Muslims and the East. Furthermore, from early 1916, Wellington House's inactivity was increasingly

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<sup>13</sup> 'The Activities of Wellington House during the Great War 1914-1918', undated, TNA INF 4/1B. Watt's father, A.P. Watt, had founded the first modern literary agency in the 1870s.

<sup>14</sup> John Attenborough, *A Living Memory: Hodder and Stoughton Publishers, 1868-1975* (London, 1975), p.57. Printing costs and paper supply were the driving factors in instituting direct publication in the US.

<sup>15</sup> Sanders and Taylor, p.108.

<sup>16</sup> See the table on page 93 produced from the Schedule of Literature in Chapter Two (the 'Table').

addressed as changing circumstances, such as the failures in the Dardanelles and Mesopotamia, Mark Sykes's growing involvement in Middle Eastern propaganda, and the need to address American concerns about atrocities in Armenia, demanded a more dynamic approach.

### ***1.2 Germany as the Object of Hate***

From the beginning propaganda was focused upon, and obsessed with, Germany, the 'jungle enemy of civilization'.<sup>17</sup> The invasion of Belgium and the atrocities committed there and in France against civilians between August and October 1914, set the tone for this approach. Emphasising German barbarity was a way of garnering sympathy from neutrals and gave meaning to the war on the home front and the propagandists wasted little time in producing the Bryce Report of May 1915 which concluded that Germany had indeed committed atrocities as part of a deliberate strategy of terror. Wellington House emphasised the success of the document in the Third Report: 'Of official Government publications the Bryce Report in eleven languages (80pp.) with its Appendix (over 300pp.) on the German atrocities easily takes first place, and stands secure as a document of permanent historical value'.<sup>18</sup> It consolidated the horror stories which had appeared in the press from August 1914 and which had effective currency throughout the war, stories of mass rape, the bayoneting of babies, the cutting off of children's hands and women's breasts and hostage murders. Its findings were reinforced in pamphlets such as *The Death of Edith Cavell* (translated by Wellington House into eight languages) and *The Horrors of Wittenberg* (nine languages) and by German methods of warfare such as their use of naval mines, the introduction of gas attacks, the sinking of the *Lusitania* (which occurred five

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<sup>17</sup> Gilbert Parker, *The World in the Crucible: An Account of the Origins & Conduct of the Great War* (New York, 1915), p.290.

<sup>18</sup> Third Report, p.8.



days before the Bryce Report was published) and zeppelin raids, all of which signalled their departure from the standards of Western civilisation.<sup>19</sup>

The depiction of the Germans as uncivilised brutes is well illustrated in the lively, detailed writings of novelist Gilbert Parker for *Wellington House*. For example, he emphasised that the Kaiser took as his exemplar Attila the Hun ‘whose chief gift, apart from sheer military prowess, not, it is understood possessed by his imitator, was sacking towns and murdering helpless civil populations’.<sup>20</sup> He stressed that such uncivilised behaviour was especially heinous because of the

age in which we live; not the age of the Inquisition, of hanging for the stealing of a sheep, of mutilation for an offence against the law – the method of the Mahdi in the Soudan. The Mahdi, the Khalifa, the Mad Mullah, Attila, Alva and Tilly, each inspired their armies with energy, courage, and the love of loot, lust and cruelty; and the last monarch of the Brandenburgs [the Kaiser] has been able to do the same.<sup>21</sup>

Parker picked out various Muslim leaders for his first three examples,<sup>22</sup> and later he compared the Kaiser’s philosophy with that of Mohammed: ‘The new religion, then, is founded on Force. To the German, as to Mohammed, “War is not only heroism, it is the Divine act.”’<sup>23</sup> He reinforced the similarities later, when he claimed:

The Kaiser is indeed the Mohammed of the modern world, imbued with the spirit of the destroyers of the Alexandrian Library, whose belief was that all it contained, “Is either in the Koran or is unworthy of attention.” .... So far as the comparison

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p.7.

<sup>20</sup> Parker, *Crucible*, p.44.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p.45.

<sup>22</sup> The Mahdi and Khalifa were Sudanese and Muhammad Abdullah Hassan, better known as the ‘Mad Mullah’ was from Somaliland. They had all opposed British rule in the preceding half century.

<sup>23</sup> Parker, *Crucible*, p.80.

between the aims of Mohammed and the Kaiser is inexact, the moral advantage lies with the Arab, in that Germany has invented her creed to sanctify her aggression.<sup>24</sup>

According to Parker, the Germans bore comparison with Mohammedans for their sanctification of war and disregard of knowledge and culture, which was in contrast to civilised nations who were essentially peace-loving and cultured, but Germans were 'worse' than Muslims because their creed had been cynically invented as opposed to being the consequence of genuine religious belief.

As Nicholas Martin has observed, many British propagandists, including Parker, were quick to associate German militarism with a crude understanding of Nietzschean philosophy.<sup>25</sup> Nietzsche's philosophy of power, his rejection of Christianity, his adoption of the concept of the *Übermensch*, provided grist for the mill of propagandists seeking a means by which Europe's shared history and civilisation could be broken down and that of the Entente distinguished from that of Germany and Austria. Accordingly, Nietzsche became an 'outlet for hysterical anti-German feeling', representing Germany's godlessness, immorality and megalomania.<sup>26</sup> In this formulation the Germans were not Christians but idolators who, in the words of one army chaplain, worshipped 'the idol of the earth – a cruel and crude monster who lives on human blood'.<sup>27</sup> Their ethos was 'no less than the betrayal of civilization by the very nation which, like one who went out and hanged himself, was most correct in its professions of loyalty to culture and morality'.<sup>28</sup> Whereas savages, such as 'Chaka the Zulu' could be excused because their standards of what constituted civilised behaviour were low,

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p.97.

<sup>25</sup> See Nicholas Martin, "Fighting a Philosophy": The Figure of Nietzsche in British Propaganda of the First World War', *The Modern Language Review*, Vol.98, No.2 (April 2003), pp.367-380, who argues that the 'ironic and incisive, elliptical and elusive Nietzsche who emerges from his texts' was replaced by the propagandists with a 'swaggering Prussian brute' (p.377).

<sup>26</sup> Martin, p.371.

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in Robb, p.115.

<sup>28</sup> Parker, *Crucible*, p.328.

Germany had ‘sinned against the light ... . She has ignored the spirit of civilized warfare’.<sup>29</sup>

Throughout Parker’s book, he emphasised historical continuities to support his current indictment of the Germans. Frequent reference to the past was a common approach in the Wellington House pamphlets. As John Buchan observed in 1914, ‘we are a history-loving people desirous of keeping open our communications with the past and basing our institutions on historical rather than logical grounds’.<sup>30</sup> For these writers, history was more than an objective, fact-gathering exercise. It was also a means of understanding Britishness, which was the product of historical experience, and now served to help define the righteous cause for which they were fighting. Was this propaganda? Taking John MacKenzie’s definition, that ‘propaganda can be defined as the transmission of ideas and values from one person, or groups of persons, to another, with the specific intention of influencing the recipients’ attitudes’, then yes it was.<sup>31</sup> However, to condemn it as nothing more than cynical manipulation of public opinion ignores the conviction with which many held the beliefs they put into words. Wellington House’s writers generally saw nothing reprehensible in seeking, like advocates in a court of law, to influence others provided they told the truth, but, of course, what they ‘knew’ to be the ‘truth’ was part of a discourse founded on the experience and beliefs of the society in which they lived and worked. These were (largely) upper class Edwardian Britons, holding an unwavering confidence in enlightened, benevolent British rule. History, in particular Britain’s just and democratic society at home and its philanthropy overseas, proved to them the innate righteousness of her cause. Men like Masterman, Buchan and Parker took pride in their belief that not only did they tell the truth but, unlike the Germans, they did not tell lies. What was not

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.343.

<sup>30</sup> Cited in Keith Grieves, “‘Nelson’s History of the War’: John Buchan as a Contemporary Military Historian’ in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.28 (1993), pp. 533-551, p.537.

<sup>31</sup> MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p.3.

acknowledged was their selectiveness. Of course, the reality of imperialism for many of the colonised, the dispossession, cruelty and privation, was unmentionable. Avoiding the use of fabricated material may have been their *modus operandi*, but so too was the omission of uncomfortable facts that sat uneasily with the messages they sought to convey.<sup>32</sup>

In his propaganda piece, *France at War*, Kipling, too, saw the fight as one between civilisation and barbarism and stressed that the one vital point which England had to realise was that, 'we are dealing with animals who have scientifically and philosophically removed themselves inconceivably outside civilization'.<sup>33</sup> Recounting an encounter with some German prisoners of war, he described them as of a 'breed' which

at the word of command, had stolen out to drown women and children; had raped women in the streets at the word of command; and, always at the word of command, had sprayed petrol, or squirted flame; or defiled the property and persons of their captives. They stood there outside all humanity.<sup>34</sup>

Kipling's de-humanised depiction of the Germans was more explicitly rendered in a short story written in 1915 called *Mary Postgate*.<sup>35</sup> The eponymous protagonist is a devoted English servant, whose young employer (a trainee pilot) has died in the war. She gains revenge by leaving a German airman, whose plane

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<sup>32</sup> As far as Ponsonby was concerned 'evasion is a more insidious form of falsehood than the deliberate lie' (Ponsonby, p.119). According to Taylor the majority of wartime falsehoods were circulated by 'a free and highly jingoistic press' (Taylor, p.3).

<sup>33</sup> Rudyard Kipling, *France at War: On the Frontier of Civilization* (New York, 1916), p.49.

<sup>34</sup> Kipling, *France at War*, p. 90.

<sup>35</sup> Rudyard Kipling, 'Mary Postgate', in Barbara Korte (ed.), *The Penguin Book of First World War Stories* (London, 2007), p.179-194 (originally published in *Nash's Magazine* in September 1915). This story has received much academic attention and is described by Firchow as 'probably the most remarkable story by a pro-war writer to come out of the war'. (P.E. Firchow, *The Death of the German Cousin, Variations on a Literary Stereotype, 1890-1920* (Lewisburg, 1986), p.103).

has crashed nearby, to die slowly, in agony, while she watches and gloats.<sup>36</sup> At first she had assumed he was British but then she sees his scalp, which, unlike the ‘dark and glossy’ heads of the British pilots she has met, was ‘as pale as a baby’s, and so closely cropped that she could see the disgusting pinky skin beneath’.<sup>37</sup> Immediately, there can be no doubt of his nationality, and the German becomes something alien and repulsive, to be referred to only as ‘it’ or the ‘thing’.

Some academics see Mary’s response to the dying German as disturbingly sexual.<sup>38</sup> Certainly, connections between barbarity and sexuality were frequently made, although, unsurprisingly, sexual perversion was generally the Germans’ domain. A commonly held belief was a German proclivity for scatological depravity although the depiction of Germans as perpetrators of sado-sexual crimes against women was, according to Robb, given the most publicity in propaganda.<sup>39</sup> ‘Recruitment speakers shocked and titillated crowds by informing them that in the event of a German victory, thousands of British girls would be taken to stud-farms in Germany’.<sup>40</sup> Edith Cavell, the Red Cross nurse executed for aiding the escape of Allied prisoners in 1915, and whose death was widely reported across Britain, embodied the sense of violated womanhood. She was the virtuous, helpless woman abused at the hands of the vile Hun. Trevor Wilson argues that

the sudden extreme pressures of war, giving free rein to the generally suppressed urge to hate, created a frame of mind eager to seize on tales in which the

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<sup>36</sup> Trotter describes this tale as a torture scene and compares it to an earlier Kipling story, *The Mark of the Beast*, in which the narrator and an accomplice torture an Indian leper who has cursed their friend with lycanthropic characteristics and is similarly de-humanised – the difference, of course, being that a ‘new set of “barbarians”’ have replaced the Oriental ones (David Trotter, *The English Novel in History, 1895-1920* (London, 1993), p.250).

<sup>37</sup> Kipling, *Mary Postgate*, p.191.

<sup>38</sup> Trudi Tate, for example, describes Mary’s reaction to the soldier’s eventual death as a ‘sinisterly controlled “orgasm”’ (Trudi Tate, *Modernism, History and the First World War* (Manchester, 1998), p.39).

<sup>39</sup> See Tate, *Modernism*, p.46 and Wallace, p.180.

<sup>40</sup> Robb, p.102.

pathological and the mysterious figured prominently. Members of the respectable classes found themselves free to verbalize sexual-sadistic fantasies under the guise of patriotic warnings.<sup>41</sup>

But it was not just about ‘sexual-sadistic’ fantasies. Such violations were symbolic. They represented and evoked a bigger fear, that of violation of the nation by an uncivilised race. In the immediate context, the Germans were the potential violator, but the potential for defilement by an ‘other’ was an ongoing preoccupation as will be explored in greater depth in Chapter Five.

### ***1.3 British Perception of Self***

George Robb claims that it was inevitable in a conflict that ‘pitted nation against nation and involved far-flung Empires’ that race would be an important concept during the war.<sup>42</sup> However, fascination with race was not just a result of the use of imperial troops. It was also symptomatic of an underlying concern with the perceived racial degeneration of British stock which was seen by many as due to large-scale migration of agricultural labourers to the cities, but in the immediate past was evidenced by Britain’s failures in the Boer War which contrasted unfavourably with earlier imperial conquests. Whereas much of the nineteenth century had witnessed a widely held belief in the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon male as a fighting machine, doubts had started to creep in. As Robb points out, ‘in popular discourse the British referred to the Germans as Huns, a negative designation to be sure, but one that also expressed fears that their rivals were a more vital, warrior race, capable of overwhelming the British Empire’.<sup>43</sup> The threat of Prussianism bears comparison with fears regarding pan-Islamism. Both were a response to the sense of vulnerability underlying the imperial project, as was the enthusiasm for labelling Germans, like Muslims, as ‘fanatics’. German

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<sup>41</sup> Trevor Wilson, *The Myriad Faces of War: Britain and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Oxford, 1986), Chapter 66, p.740.

<sup>42</sup> Robb, p.5.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p.8.

fanaticism differed from the Islamic kind as it was the result of excessive militarism as opposed to religious fervour, but whilst both were capable of generating contempt, the energy and passion associated with such epithets also had the potential to undermine British ideas of their own vigour and martial prowess as well as challenging the strong belief in the supremacy of rationality as the guiding principle of thought and behaviour.

Unsurprisingly, considering such doubts, there was an emphasis in Wellington House's pamphlets on the strength, valour and gallantry of the British soldier, which was a mirror of their depiction of the nation as one characterised by honesty, fair play (epitomised by their willingness to go to war over a 'scrap of paper') and imperial might. Typical of this approach is the work of John Masfield, the poet and novelist (and attendee of the original meeting at Wellington House in September 1914), who had participated in the Dardanelles campaign as part of an ambulance unit. He was subsequently commissioned to produce a book about the campaign in which he sought to vindicate the actions of British leadership and the failure of the campaign largely by emphasising the bravery of the Allied troops against insurmountable odds. In the words of Philip Waller, he turned the campaign into a 'tragic romance' and his book sold like 'wildfire'.<sup>44</sup> 'No army in history has made a more heroic attack', claimed Masfield, 'no army in history has been set such a task. No other body of men in any modern war has been called upon to land over mined and wired waters under the cross fire of machine guns'.<sup>45</sup> It is instructive to compare this idealised version with the interpretation offered in the Final Report of the Dardanelles Commission, which stated baldly at paragraph 198, 'These operations failed, partly because the Turks were too strong, partly because some of our troops and

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<sup>44</sup> Philip Waller, *Writers, Readers, and Reputations: Literary Life in Britain, 1870-1918* (Oxford, 2006), p.945.

<sup>45</sup> John Masfield, *Gallipoli* (New York, 1916), p.33.

their leaders were unequal to the task assigned them, partly through shortage of water, and partly because the plan was defective'.<sup>46</sup>

As Masfield's *Gallipoli* illustrates, the gallantry and heroism of the Anglo-Saxon soldiers, which included the white Dominion troops who participated in the campaign, was portrayed as being without equal. That the non-white 'martial races' were good fighters was acknowledged, but they could not be considered as on a par: 'Our men achieved a feat without parallel in war and no other troops in the world (not even Japanese or Gurkhas or Ghazis in the hope of heaven) would have made good those beaches ...'.<sup>47</sup> He described how 'on the body of a dead Turk officer was a letter written the night before to his wife, a tender letter, filled mostly with personal matters. In it was the phrase, "These British are the finest fighters in the world. We have chosen the wrong friends"'.<sup>48</sup>

Wellington House's authors also produced novels and short stories along a similar vein emphasising traditional English soldierly virtues and vilifying the Germans. Buitenhuis claims the rationale behind this glorification of war was to distance and falsify 'the sordid reality of trench warfare, the inept staff-work and poor leadership, and the wastage of men and material'.<sup>49</sup> This is a simplistic analysis revealing the author's failure to contextualise his primary sources in the contemporary belief system. It is more apt to reiterate that value-laden accounts were the norm and were not necessarily part of a cynical and deliberate plot to mislead the public. As Buitenhuis observes elsewhere, Wellington House's writers, figures like James, Wharton, Conrad, Bennett, Wells, Kipling, Conan Doyle and Hueffer, 'genuinely believed that the cause of civilization itself was at

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<sup>46</sup> Final Report of the Dardanelles Commission, 4 December 1917, LHCMA Robertson Papers 4/7/2.

<sup>47</sup> Masfield, p.34.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p.111.

<sup>49</sup> Buitenhuis, p.xvii.



stake in this conflict, which thus justified their greatest and most passionate efforts to help'.<sup>50</sup>

The war also offered the opportunity to assuage the religious doubts that beset many during the Edwardian era. According to some historians, by the turn of the century confidence in the deeply felt religious purpose of English Protestantism had given way to doubt and confusion brought on by the convulsions in society and the rise of materialism, technology and commercialism.<sup>51</sup> The war added to the desire to find meaning in life itself. 'Messianic beliefs, hope, despair, the apocalypse, redemption, suffering, sacrifice, crusade, punishment – these were the words that contemporaries uttered, wrote, prayed, wept, and turned into images'.<sup>52</sup> The propagandists aggressively articulated the strength of Britain's religious certainty and righteousness as part of the construct of Britain as the great civilising nation. Accordingly, the view that there was an 'evangelical fervour' in many of Wellington House's pamphlets is a fair one.<sup>53</sup> Thus, British soldiers were frequently depicted as Christians, even as God's chosen warriors, in a battle against barbarism. Henry James drew on the religious symbolism when he claimed that England's pastoral idyll had been transformed by war so that its opposition to the Prussian 'fist' was like 'some great religious service, with prostrations and exaltations, the light of a thousand candles and the sound of soaring choirs'.<sup>54</sup> Of course, the Church capitalised on these allusions: 'Ministers frequently compared Germany to Biblical aggressor nations like Babylon or Assyria, in which case Britain was linked to God's chosen people, the

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p.8.

<sup>51</sup> See, for example, Satia, p.85.

<sup>52</sup> Annette Becker, 'Faith, Ideologies, and the "Cultures of War"' in John Horne (ed.), *A Companion to World War I* (Chichester, 2012), p.234.

<sup>53</sup> Buitenhuis, p.21. The origins of the pamphlet as a means of distributing ideas and information lay in the religious documents of the sixteenth and seventeenth century when religious sects engaged in debate this way.

<sup>54</sup> Henry James, *Within the Rim and Other Essays, 1914-15* (London, 1918), p.30. The essay was written in February 1915.

Israelites'.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, according to Becker, sermons inviting respect for the enemy were extremely rare. Rather, 'hatred of the enemy became the strongest expression of a sacred love of God and the fatherland and was virtually obligatory once the war had been agreed to'.<sup>56</sup>

The idea of Allied soldiers as God's chosen ones, capable of displaying Christ-like sacrifices, is illustrated by the mythologising of Rupert Brooke following his death in April 1915 on the way to the Dardanelles. Stories such as 'The Bowmen' by Arthur Machen also encouraged the notion of Allied soldiers as being divinely appointed. Inspired by Kipling and Chesterton, Machen told of a soldier who during the battle of Mons saw shining shapes and a cloud of arrows fly through the air.<sup>57</sup> Suddenly, thousands of Germans lay dead on the field with no evident injuries. The soldier believed St George had brought the long bowmen of Agincourt to fight alongside the British. The public took up and embellished the story, turning the ghostly bowmen into angels. At least six further books were published on the topic, all supporting a belief that angels were at work on the Allied side.<sup>58</sup> Christian imagery abounded in other forms too. For example, popular novelist, Ian Hay, wrote of an Allied soldier being crucified by the Germans.<sup>59</sup> In a subsequent novel, he adopted the motif of a sorrowful Christ figure on the cross, standing in a devastated village, body riddled with bullets but face miraculously untouched.<sup>60</sup>

The British sought to promote themselves as a civilised, peace-loving nation with a God-given mandate to bring peace and prosperity to the world and an army endowed with the best martial material. 'We are the indispensable nation. We

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<sup>55</sup> Robb, p.114.

<sup>56</sup> Becker, 'Faith', p.238.

<sup>57</sup> Arthur Machen, 'The Bowmen' in Korte, pp.3-6, p.3.

<sup>58</sup> Buitenhuis, p.104.

<sup>59</sup> Ian Hay, *The First Hundred Thousand* (London, 1915), p.199.

<sup>60</sup> Ian Hay, *Carrying On – After the First Hundred Thousand* (London, 1917), p.173.

stand tall, and we see further into the future'.<sup>61</sup> This was how Britain perceived her unique role although the words come from Madeleine Albright, describing Britain's imperial successor, the USA, in 1998. Less anachronistically, Cecil Rhodes expressed similar sentiments a century earlier when he contended, 'we are the first race in the world' and 'the more of the world we inhabit, the better it is for the human race'.<sup>62</sup> However, concealed in this inflated and complacent world view of entitlement was a sense of tremulousness not only about the quality of her 'stock' but also her ability and, indeed her right, to maintain her position as an imperial power.

#### ***1.4 The Ottoman Empire in Wellington House Pamphlets and Books***

Between 1914 and 1916, Wellington House grappled with how best to communicate and legitimise Britain's role as a belligerent in the conflict. The chief way in which it sought to do this was via anti-German propaganda in allied and neutral countries. As the propagandists themselves observed, the majority of the early pamphlets were concerned with 'counteracting the German propagandism in a kind of international competition to prove whether the Allies or the German Powers were right. It was a fight over the true interpretation of the immediate and (to some extent) the remoter causes of the war'.<sup>63</sup> By early 1916, three principle purposes defined the object of their work: to provide commentary and information and to explain the incidents of the war as they arose and affected neutral rights and interests; to overcome German propaganda, 'still amazingly active'; and, to provide information to Britain's allies illustrating British war efforts and their determination to carry out their efforts until final

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<sup>61</sup> Cited in Linda Colley, 'The Difficulties of Empire: Present, Past and Future' in *Historical Research*, Vol. 79, No.205, 2006, pp.367-382, p.370.

<sup>62</sup> Cited in Boehmer, *Migrant Metaphors*, p.42.

<sup>63</sup> Second Report, p.5.

victory.<sup>64</sup> Over and above these more practical objectives was the pursuit of an ideological battle. The need to counter German *Kultur* and promote British values, in other words to deal with ‘the interpretation, in theory and practice, of what German militarism stands for, and the emphasis of the ruin which would come upon all free countries, if the Germanic powers and their allies should prove victorious’.<sup>65</sup>

In early February 1916 Edward Long (a journalist with extensive experience in India, having been editor of the *Rangoon Times* and *Indian Daily Telegraph* and also acted as Indian correspondent for *The Times*, *Standard* and *Express*) was appointed to take charge of Muslim-related propaganda but until that point very little such work was undertaken.<sup>66</sup> Between the start of the war and the Gallipoli campaign only two pamphlets were issued directly concerned with Britain’s war with Turkey.<sup>67</sup> One set out the documents that led to the breach, the other was E.T. Cook’s *Great Britain and Turkey: The Causes of the Rupture* (published in several European languages and the only pamphlet to appear in Arabic and Turkish during the first half of the war).<sup>68</sup> These pamphlets indicate an awareness from the outset of the war of a need to protect Muslim sensibilities, as does a notice to the press from December 1914 which warned that ‘the publication of any matter calculated to have a needlessly hostile effect upon Mohammedan opinion should be avoided’ and ‘discussion of the question of the Caliphate is to be deprecated’.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> This third area was a response to requests from the Foreign Office to respond to ‘an undercurrent of uneasiness [which] was found manifesting itself in France and to a lesser extent in Russia, as to whether the efforts and sacrifices being made by England were comparable with those of our Allies or commensurate with the importance of the struggle’ (Second Report, p.5).

<sup>65</sup> Second Report, p.5.

<sup>66</sup> Long to Hirtzel, 11 February 1916, BL IO L/PS/10/581/454.

<sup>67</sup> Schedule of Literature, IWM (91.9(41):49), A/C No. 80/311.

<sup>68</sup> *Miscellaneous, No. 13, 1914: Correspondence respecting Events Leading to the Rupture of Relations with Turkey* (London, 1914) and E.T. Cook, *Great Britain and Turkey: The Causes of the Rupture* (London, 1914).

<sup>69</sup> ‘Appendix (b) Official Press Bureau Instructions’, Notice D.122, 24 December 1914, TNA INF 4/4B.

Cook's pamphlet appears to have been written with two primary considerations in mind. The first was to respond to a series of attacks upon Sir Edward Grey's treatment of Anglo-Turkish relations in *The Times*, in which the Foreign Secretary was accused of mishandling the Ottoman Empire both before and after they joined the war in November 1914. It also addressed the special predicament Britain had been put in as a result of her imperial position. Thus, in the opening section Cook observed,

To the British Empire many of the questions involved in Turkey's action are of special importance. The Turkish Empire had been bound to Great Britain, as His Majesty King George recently reminded the Sultan, "by a friendship of more than a century." Britain was in administrative occupation of lands which still acknowledged the suzerainty of the Sultan. The realm of the King-Emperor is, politically, the greatest of Mohammedan States, and in the Mohammedan world the Sultan of Turkey occupies, religiously, an influential place. From all these points of view it is of real importance that the events leading to the rupture of relations between Great Britain and Turkey should be understood clearly and rightly; that every British subject, and if possible every Mohammedan community throughout the world, should know who strove to keep the peace and who, as principals or accessories, insisted upon making war.<sup>70</sup>

As the pamphlet progressed Cook chronicled the instances in the lead up to the declaration of war where Britain had made every effort 'with great patience and forbearance' to preserve the friendship despite repeated acts of aggression and deceit on Turkey's part. In particular, he pointed to Turkey's numerous efforts in conjunction with Germany to stir anti-British feeling in the British Empire. For example, he described efforts to incite rebellion in Egypt, referring to a plot in which the British had discovered that German officers had commissioned a tailor in Aleppo to 'make a variety of Indian costumes and head-dresses', possibly, suggested Cook, so that German agents could impersonate Indian soldiers.<sup>71</sup> Later, he told of how, 'with the object of spreading the belief that Great Britain is the enemy of Islam, the German Embassy daily emits a stream of mendacity and

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<sup>70</sup> Cook, p.3.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p.22. This is a story that appears a number of times in later pamphlets.

calumny, which is circulated throughout the country by the Turkish newspapers'.<sup>72</sup> Cook identified the 'masterpiece' of German and Turkish activities as the propagation of a belief that the 'German Emperor has embraced Islamic faith, and that Germans are fighting for Islam against Russia'.<sup>73</sup>

Finally, Cook emphasised that Britain's quarrel was with the Ottoman Government and not with Islam or the Turkish people and he stressed that under British rule 'every race and creed enjoy liberty and protection'.<sup>74</sup> Although Cook did not hesitate to criticise the Turkish government for its duplicity and opportunism, it is notable that he did not cast judgment on the nature of Ottoman rule in her dominions. Whereas the pamphlets of 1917-18 focused on the long history of Ottoman oppression and tyranny and the inability of the Turkish race to govern other, alien races, the emphasis in 1914 was on British reluctance to go to war with an 'old friend'.

Cook's relatively benign stance towards the Turks was widely held although not always for the same reasons. For example, Parker, who was certainly not interested in protecting Muslim sensibilities, but was very interested in garnering American sympathies, described the Turks not as aggressors but as the gullible acolytes of the Germans. He pointed out that nothing was expected of Turkey other than to exist, and he did not refer to the nature of Ottoman rule other than to comment on its general weakness.<sup>75</sup> Condescendingly, Turkey was to be pitied rather than hated. In lurid, evocative language, Parker sent Turkey to her doom: 'inextricably involved in the intrigues of greater Powers, hounded on every side by guilty fears of attack and spoliation, deceived, bribed and threatened, the blind and impotent invalid of Europe stumbles forward, scimitar in hand, to death and

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p.23.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p.24.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p.29.

<sup>75</sup> He does refer to Ottoman oppression in the Balkans against the Slavs and the Greeks but they appear to be distinguishable because they are European and Christian (he describes them as a 'spiritually superior people' – Parker, *Crucible*, p.292) and no opprobrium is attached to Turkish rule in Ottoman Asia.

dissolution'.<sup>76</sup> The Germans were guilty of guile, cunning and deep dishonesty in their dealings with her and were, argued Parker, undoubtedly to blame for Turkey's entry into the war: 'as in the old Arabian tale, Turkey was bestridden and throttled by an incubus from which she never could free herself'.<sup>77</sup> By relying on stock assumptions about the 'Oriental Mind', Parker excused the Turks rather than condemned them. Suffering from the typical shortcomings of an 'Oriental' race – vanity, greed, corruption and shallowness – the Turks fell victim to the more sophisticated influences of Prussianism.

Once the Dardanelles campaign began, there was a call for a different sort of propaganda, but again, it was propaganda displaying a distinct lack of animus towards the Turks. Lieutenant-Commander Josiah Wedgwood, who participated in the landings, wrote an account of his experience for the *Westminster Gazette* in 1915, and it was subsequently reproduced as a pamphlet entitled *With Machine-Guns in Gallipoli*. The emphasis was on the bravery and sacrifice of the British troops landing by boat on the beach in front of the castle and town of Seddel Bahr. Wedgwood did not underplay the carnage that was taking place, nor did he display vitriol against the Turks. His first reference to them as soldiers was a comment on Islamic ideologies of martyrdom. 'All these things I saw as in a dream as I moved from casemate to casemate, watching to see Turks, wearing an "Election smile," and trying to pretend in an even voice to men who had never seen death that this was the best of all possible worlds'.<sup>78</sup> The implication was that the Turks too were struggling to comprehend so much death and pain and that the prospect of eternal paradise in the event of suffering a jihadist's death was hard to rationalise in the face of such an experience. Wedgwood did not dismiss the Turks as fanatics and, whilst their religion was referred to, it was the common humanity joining friend and foe that he emphasised. This is further underlined in his description of Turkish compassion towards the stretcher-

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<sup>76</sup> Parker, *Crucible*, p.302.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p.290.

<sup>78</sup> Josiah Wedgwood, *With Machine-Guns in Gallipoli* (London, 1915), p.7.

bearers: 'The Turks could easily have killed all those who went to the wounded. They did not fire on them sometimes for ten minutes, and then a burst of fire would come. Then and afterwards I found them extraordinarily merciful as compared with the Germans in Flanders'.<sup>79</sup> As night fell, and the battle progressed, it was then that Wedgwood

first learnt the shout of "Allah," for the Turks charged. All night long the battle raged. On shore everyone was firing at they knew not what. Our men went up the hills through the Turks; and the Turks came down through ours to the beach. Over and past each other they went, sometimes not seeing, sometimes glad to pass on in the darkness.<sup>80</sup>

Again, it was the commonalities rather than differences between the Allied troops and the Turks that were emphasised.

When Wedgwood and his men made it up to a village they found a scene of carnage:

Everywhere were our dead Munsters and Dublins, some horribly mutilated and burnt. No wounded had survived. Two German officers were found and killed. These fiends, it appears, had instigated the things done to those dying Irishmen; and we never afterwards found similar Turkish atrocities. The Turks are the finest and best fighters in the world, save only the Canadians and Australians.<sup>81</sup>

This extract shows how important it was in 1915 to bear witness to the barbarism of the Germans and how the propagandists had yet to see the merits of similarly defining the Turks. A further Press Notice, dated 16 March 1915, reminding journalists of the importance of avoiding references 'which might be interpreted as implying that this is a war of Christian versus Moslem', also sought to ensure the careful depiction of the Turks.<sup>82</sup> And, of course, stressing Turkish military

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<sup>79</sup> Wedgwood, p.8. See also Herbert's comments in Chapter Five, p.272.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p.9.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p.11.

<sup>82</sup> Press Notice D.186, 16 March 1915, BL IO L/PS/11/103.



ability was a means of ensuring that the nobility of the Allied troops' sacrifice, and their own martial prowess, was not undermined. Wedgwood compared Seddel Bahr with Sharpsburg, which he claimed was 'for the numbers engaged, the bloodiest battle in history' and 'a joy ride compared with Seddel Bahr'.<sup>83</sup>

Masefield's *Gallipoli* provided a different style of account. He had recently completed a lecture tour of America on behalf of Wellington House, where it had become clear that the Dardanelles Campaign had made a negative impression, and, on his return, he was asked to write an account of the campaign which was subsequently published in the US as well as in England. By the time he was commissioned to write *Gallipoli* the evacuation had taken place and so the failure of the enterprise was already apparent. As a consequence, the thrust of the book is a depiction of the valiant efforts of the Allied soldiers against insurmountable odds, as opposed to an accurate account of events. The campaign had become one that was 'about perception as well as concrete outcomes'.<sup>84</sup> No doubt in part to vindicate Allied failings, Masefield did not stint in treating the Turks as worthy opponents. They may not have been able to match the Anglo-Saxons in valour but they were a tough enemy nevertheless: 'The Turkish army was well supplied, well equipped, more numerous and in better positions than our own. There was neither talk nor thought among them at any time of surrender, nor could there have been, in an army so placed and so valiant'.<sup>85</sup> Whilst he could relate to them physically, psychologically he found them baffling: 'among their qualities of mind were some which greatly puzzled our commanders. Their minds would sometimes work in ways very strange to Europeans'.<sup>86</sup> But Masefield was not dismissive or derogatory. He consistently treated the Turks with respect and admiration. He assumed that a day would come when the war would be over and

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<sup>83</sup> Wedgwood, p.12.

<sup>84</sup> Porter, *Military Orientalism*, p.184, writing about Israel's war with Lebanon's Hizballa.

<sup>85</sup> Masefield, p.85.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p.231.

the Turkish version of events would be revealed and understood. He was curious as opposed to angry and vengeful.

Wedgwood and Masfield's work indicates a benign and respectful approach towards Ottoman soldiery but this sat in tandem with assumptions regarding the superiority of Anglo-Saxon material. The Ottoman army was much smaller than that of any of the other belligerents and this fact, together with a succession of Ottoman military failures in the early months of the war, notably at Sarıkamış in the Caucasus, Shaiba in Mesopotamia and Suez, reinforced pre-existing assumptions regarding Oriental military inadequacies. In the event, of course, as Darwin puts it, 'the soft underbelly of the Central Powers proved as hard as nails' in the Dardanelles, much to the disappointment and chagrin of those who had masterminded the campaign.<sup>87</sup> In a letter to Kitchener, expedition commander, General Sir Ian Hamilton, revealed the racial bias that often underlined dismissive attitudes towards the Turks:

Let me bring my lads face to face with Turks in the open field, we *must* beat them every time because British volunteer soldiers are superior individuals to Anatolians, Syrians or Arabs and are animated with a superior ideal and an equal joy in battle. Wire and machine guns prevent this hand to hand, or rifle to rifle, style of contest. Well, then the decent thing to do is to give us shells enough to clear a fair field. To attempt to solve the problem by letting a single dirty Turk at the Maxim kill ten – twenty – fifty – of our fellows on the barbed wire, – ten – twenty – fifty – *each of whom is worth several dozen Turks*, is a sin of the Holy Ghost category unless it can be justified by dire necessity.<sup>88</sup>

For Hamilton, 'Tommy Atkins' was not only racially superior to the 'dirty Turk' but inspired by superior ideals. He recognised Islamic beliefs as potent incentives but assumed, like many of his peers, that Western values, such as the rule of law, democracy, rationalism, unfailingly held the edge in terms of ideological motivation.

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<sup>87</sup> John Darwin, *After Tamerlane: The Global History of Empire since 1405* (London, 2007), p.375.

<sup>88</sup> I.S.M Hamilton, *Gallipoli Diary, Vol.I* (Woking, 1920), p.305.

### ***1.5 Maintaining British Prestige***

By September 1916 various sub-departments had been set up at Wellington House including one for 'Eastern and Moslem Propaganda' under the directorship of Edward Long, and it was acknowledged that anti-British propaganda conducted by the Germans and the Turks was an issue that required attention. Section 12 of Wellington House's Third Report is worth quoting from at length:

In those countries which are either within the Empire or under the influence of the Allies, it has not been an easy matter for the Germans to carry on work of a propagandist nature. But early in the war German agents did, undoubtedly, carry on a certain amount of propagandist work in India, mostly in a very subtle manner by disseminating false and misleading rumours in the native bazaars, by exaggerating German power and under-rating the power of the Allies. In Egypt, also, a great deal was done in this way to weaken British influence, and both there, in India, and throughout all Allied countries containing a Moslem population, Germany endeavoured, by compelling the Turks to declare a Jihad, to inflame the Moslem mind against its Christian rulers and induce Moslems everywhere to rise in the supposed defence of their faith.

In those countries which are not directly under British influence, German propaganda has of course been rife. In Turkey, Persia, Arabia and Afghanistan the population is practically all Moslem, and Germany has endeavoured to make the most of her Jihad .... Germany is represented as being very great and powerful, all-victorious, and the friend of Islam. Photographs of British Moslem prisoners being treated kindly are shown, also the large mosque Germany has built for their benefit. In Persia, too, the *gendarmerie* has been excited to revolt. In Afghanistan we have been represented as waiting for an opportunity to crush small Moslem states, and the Afghans have been, counselled to rise, and promised help by way of Persia.

It follows, therefore, that there is abundant need for propaganda from our side in these countries. There is a German-inspired Turkish hostile influence to counteract amongst all Moslems, and a profound ignorance of the strength and resources of the Allies to be dispelled, and in its place an impression created of the vast resources of the British Empire and its Allies, and of the hopelessness of the

German prospect of victory. At the present time in many of these lands, in India especially, the natives have an exaggerated idea of German power, and particularly of German cleverness. The tale is that the British fight bravely, but the Germans are too clever for them, and the results to date of the fighting in Europe are used with effect to illustrate this argument ....<sup>89</sup>

A typical German pamphlet is *Lest We Forget ... A Page from the History of the English in Egypt* written in May 1915 by Dr M.M. Rifat.<sup>90</sup> This pamphlet, aimed at an Egyptian audience, had Arabic pages accompanied by graphic photographs of a man being hanged and another being flogged. In the English section it stated that the photos and Arabic text provide an example of the ‘savage brutality of the English race when under the influence of greed, revenge, or ambition’.<sup>91</sup> The photographs make it a much cruder, more explicit form of propaganda than evident in any of the British pamphlets.

The pamphlet described a controversial incident that had taken place at Denshawāi in Egypt in 1906 when a hunting trip went wrong. The English officers set fire to a farm and injured a woman while they were trying to pigeon-shoot. A fight broke out, and three English officers were wounded. One subsequently died of heatstroke after he allegedly ran from the melee for more than three miles. The pamphlet told how the British failed to give the villagers a fair trial and how within two weeks of the event a verdict was passed whereby ‘four Egyptians were condemned to be hanged, two were sentenced to hard labour for life, one to fifteen years’ hard labour, another to seven years’, three to a year’s imprisonment and to be publicly flogged, and five to a flogging only – each to receive fifty strokes of the lash, a lash with five tails’.<sup>92</sup> The punishments took place in the village so the families of the punished could bear witness. Rifat

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<sup>89</sup> Third Report, p.90.

<sup>90</sup> M.M. Rifat, *Lest We Forget ... A Page from the History of the English in Egypt* (Possibly Berlin, 1915).

<sup>91</sup> Rifat, *Lest We Forget*, p.1.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p.3.

declared the date of the executions and floggings as ‘a fatal date in history. It is worthy of figuring in the annals of the worst excesses of savagery’.<sup>93</sup>

Rifat produced a second pamphlet in 1915 making more general allegations against the British based on extracts from English documents relating to Egypt dating from 1882 to 1914, which Rifat declared to be evidence of her perfidious political methods. The frontispiece contained a photo of the Khedive of Egypt, Abbas Hilmi II, and the pamphlet was dedicated to him. Implying that there was already much unrest, Rifat declared:

We do not wish to add fuel to the fire of hate burning fiercely enough already; but it appears to us to be a timely and salutary undertaking to prove that England who professes to a respect for the rights of other nations amounting almost to a religion has been the very one to inaugurate the breach of such principle. It would have been far more honest if England as her reason for siding with her present allies had referred to her previous engagements with them instead of trading upon the alleged violation by Germany of the Belgian neutrality.<sup>94</sup>

Rifat went on to argue that ‘had England herself never outraged the neutrality of other countries she would not stand at the head of a large colonial Empire now’.<sup>95</sup> He demonstrated, by reference to the documents, that in 1882 England professed her aim in Egypt as being no more than the fostering of Egypt’s prosperity and liberty, but by 1914 Egypt had been annexed to her empire.

Wellington House’s records indicate that they did not produce any pamphlets up to September 1916 directly countering these sorts of allegations. It seems that an express response to Rifat’s allegations was only made in 1917 when J.S. Willmore produced a pamphlet called *The Welfare of Egypt*. The contents of this pamphlet will be considered in Chapter Two. What is notable here is the absence

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>94</sup> M.M. Rifat, *Damaging Evidence against English Hypocrisy: Two Dates 1882-1914, Egypt and Belgium* (Possibly Berlin, 1915), p.1.

<sup>95</sup> Rifat, *English Hypocrisy*, p.1.

of an earlier rejoinder despite a keen awareness of widespread and persistent efforts on the part of the Central Powers to mobilize religiously driven resistance. This accords with Wellington House's own assessment of its priorities, outlined above. What appears to have become a more pressing concern, at least by early 1916, was to counter damage to British prestige resulting from German propaganda and the military failures in the Dardanelles and in Mesopotamia (culminating in the fall of Kut on 29 April 1916). Justifying their imperial past (with an eye to their imperial future) and denigrating their Turkish foe was less important than ensuring that the stability of the Empire was not threatened by any further loss of prestige.

The Indo-Egyptian party in London and the governments in Cairo and Delhi were especially concerned about the potential outcome of a loss of prestige, as is clear from Robertson's (Chief of the Imperial General Staff) correspondence. Although himself a committed 'Westerner', he was frequently reminded of the potential risks by his many correspondents. C.E. Callwell, for example, pointed out to Robertson in October 1915 that 'we have to get the French to realise that if we abandon the Dardanelles we shall have a troublesome position in Egypt, Mesopotamia and Persia, because (quite apart from the question of prestige) it releases Turkish forces, fitted out with stuff from Krupp, to worry us'.<sup>96</sup> Meanwhile, Lord Curzon advocated advancing towards Baghdad as, if it were captured, the victory would 'ring through the East and would cause such an impression that it would partially discount any failure at the Dardanelles'.<sup>97</sup> Negative reporting of both campaigns in the British press was also a cause for worry. A Cabinet memorandum from November 1915 reveals concern that the Germans were circulating 'all over the Mohammedan world' extracts from *The Times* in which the Dardanelles campaign was described as a 'complete failure'

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<sup>96</sup> Callwell to Robertson, 24 October 1915, LHMCA Robertson Papers 7/2/32.

<sup>97</sup> Quoted in French, 'Prestige', p. 55.

and a 'great blunder' and the Mesopotamian campaign as suffering from tough resistance by the Turks.<sup>98</sup>

With the abandonment of the Dardanelles and then the failed Mesopotamian campaign, the pressing need was seen to be to communicate across the Islamic world 'the vast resources of the British Empire and its Allies, and ... the hopelessness of the German prospect of victory'.<sup>99</sup> In other words, the propagandists needed to emphasise British prestige despite military failures in the East. Furthermore, despite the conflict with the Ottomans, it was vital to show 'Great Britain as the friend of Mohammedanism'.<sup>100</sup> Another Press Notice was released in February 1916 emphasising for the third time the need for careful reporting. The Notice stressed:

Above all things it is necessary to avoid the publication of pictures or photographs which would offend Muhammadan sensibilities or appear to show that Germany and Austria are more concerned for the comfort, the feelings and the prejudices of Muhammadans than are the Allies.<sup>101</sup>

These two factors, the need to illustrate British power and to emphasise that the Allies, particularly Britain, and not the Central Powers, were Islam's true friends, resulted in the implementation of a fortnightly illustrated newspaper called *al-Haqīqah* (The Truth), initially published in Arabic, Turkish, Hindustani and Persian. It became the chief propagandist vehicle for influencing Muslim opinion.

Wellington House had first broached the idea of such a publication with the India Office in July 1915 but the suggestion was dismissed.<sup>102</sup> When E.A. Gowers,

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<sup>98</sup> 'The Northcliffe Press and Foreign Opinion', 1 November 1915, TNA INF 4/1B.

<sup>99</sup> Third Report, p.90.

<sup>100</sup> Minute, Hirtzel, approx January 1916, BL IO L/PS/10/581/462.

<sup>101</sup> Press Notice D.363, 21 February 1916, BL IO L/PS/11/103.

<sup>102</sup> Gowers to Hirtzel, 15 December 1915, BL IO L/PS/10/581/466.

Wellington House's Chief Executive, raised the prospect again in December 1915, the changing military landscape prompted a different response. This time the India Office was fully supportive and *al-Haqīqah* was very much a joint project between Wellington House, the Foreign Office and the India Office.<sup>103</sup> Arthur Hirtzel, Secretary of the Political and Secret Department of the India Office, stressed that although it was designed to show Britain's friendship with Islam it was important not 'to glorify the Turk, nor to represent him in an especially favourable light'.<sup>104</sup> Whilst it would be distributed in India, and amongst Indian troops elsewhere, it was Hirtzel's view that its primary function should be to 'influence in favour of the allies actual or potential belligerents in the middle east. These, from the nature of the case, will be mainly Arabs, Persians, possibly the Indian frontier tribes, and such Turks as there may be discontented with their Government'.<sup>105</sup>

Although there is some evidence that a small number of copies were dropped from Allied airplanes over Anatolia, most were sent to India, Afghanistan, Egypt and the Expeditionary Force in Mesopotamia.<sup>106</sup> A lesser number were sent to other destinations with Muslim populations including Persia, Abyssinia, Sudan, Nigeria, Java and China.<sup>107</sup> As with the pamphlets, Wellington House sought to keep the government's involvement secret. When, in August 1916, *The Daily Telegraph* congratulated the government on the publication of *al-Haqīqah*, the Foreign Office was annoyed.<sup>108</sup> An Indian distributor was warned to be 'exceedingly careful at all times to give away nothing as regards the actual origin

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<sup>103</sup> Minute, Hirtzel, approx January 1916, BL IO L/PS/10/581/462.

<sup>104</sup> Hirtzel to Long, 11 February 1916, BL IO L/PS/10/581/457.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> The War Office organised distribution by airplane (Third Report, p.90-91). No further details on this method have been found.

<sup>107</sup> A small number (initially around 700) were sent to Salonika (Third Report, p.90-91).

<sup>108</sup> Michael Lewis Sanders *Official British Propaganda in Allied and Neutral Countries during the First World War with Particular reference to Organisation and Methods* (Unpublished M.Phil. thesis, London, 1972) p.102.



of the paper, its purpose from a propagandist point of view, and so forth ...'.<sup>109</sup> However, as most of the 75,000 copies were distributed free of charge (via a mixture of official bodies such as the governments of India and Egypt, the War Office, the Foreign Office, and the Colonial Office and informal bodies such as steamship companies, the Over-Seas Club and private firms), passing them off as non-government funded publications was easier said than done.

As the destinations indicate, the same propaganda was distributed amongst Muslims within the Empire, Muslims in neutral countries and Muslims in the Ottoman Empire. Wellington House evidently believed in a universal 'Oriental Mind' which would respond uniformly to their propaganda. A valuable insight into Western assumptions regarding this archetype is provided by Edward Long in his description of how the style of the paper was formulated:

The native of the countries with which we are concerned is generally unable to read, and often, he mistrusts both the person who is reading to him and that which is written. Pictures, however, awaken in his mind impressions which are not easily effaced ... . We ordinarily use photographs in preference to drawings (the oriental has a firm belief in the veracity of the camera), and select them with the object both of making a special appeal to Moslem susceptibilities and also of giving as complete an illustration as possible of the power and resources of the British Empire and its Allies. For instance, battleships, big guns, airships, masses of troops, stores of shells and shell factories, shipbuilding yards with vessels on the stocks, and aircraft factories are shown, together with those curious contrivances of modern warfare which are calculated to impress the Oriental and African mind; British and Allied victories on land and sea and in the air are illustrated; photographs of German and Austrian prisoners, wrecked Zeppelins, and captured guns and seaplanes are used. A special feature is made of the various types of Moslem soldiers who are fighting for us and our Allies, and the facilities granted for the special observance of their religious rites. Photographs are shown of Oriental and African potentates who have contributed generously to war funds, together with suitable letterpress. The importance is borne in mind of portraying in the most favourable light the benevolent toleration of the Powers of the Entente

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<sup>109</sup> Long to Hirtzel, 26 September 1916, BL IO L/PS/10/581/333.

towards Islam. Photographs of the King are also useful, and His Majesty has been good enough to give us special facilities for our work.<sup>110</sup>

*Al-Haqīqah* was printed in photogravure, in two colours because it was viewed as essential for it to be imposing. As Edward Long explained, ‘the size is double that of an ordinary illustrated paper, in order that a more spectacular effect may be obtained’.<sup>111</sup> Pictorial content formed the bulk of the publication but the pictures were accompanied by explanatory captions in each of the four languages.

From the beginning Wellington House was beset with criticisms about the quality of the translations. The Consul-General of Meshed complained to the Indian government that ‘the Persian is very bad and the handwriting is execrable’.<sup>112</sup> The India Office received a complaint that ‘the language is often so incorrect, so archaic and so full of solecisms as to offer a target for facetious criticism in the Indian Press’.<sup>113</sup> Wellington House did their best to find competent translators but were, in any event, sanguine about the criticisms. Gowers commented that ‘experts in oriental languages seem to beat all other experts in their inability to agree with one another’.<sup>114</sup> Long pointed out that favourable comments and demands for more indicated the success of the paper and he quoted from a number of letters received from around the Empire in praise of it. One letter came from someone identified as being a ‘well-known business man in Calcutta’, who described *al-Haqīqah* as ‘a great Imperial Educator’.<sup>115</sup> Another letter from India explained that ‘in the north, and amongst the fighting races, [copies of *al-*

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<sup>110</sup> Third Report, p.90-91. Examples of Long’s techniques in *al-Haqīqah* can be found at Appendix 1. Images 1, 2 and 3 contain extracts from early editions and Image 13 shows a title page with a photograph of George V.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Haig to Grant, 28 April 1916, BL IO L/PS/10/581/399.

<sup>113</sup> Home Dept., Govt. of India to Seton, 24 January 1917, BL IO L/PS/10/581/231.

<sup>114</sup> Gowers to Shuckburgh, 15 June 1916, BL IO L/PS/10/581/396.

<sup>115</sup> Quoted in Third Report, p.90-91.

*Haqīqah*] go like hot cakes, particularly among the old boys who can read them to the villagers'.<sup>116</sup>

Although Delhi took copies of *al-Haqīqah* there was evidently little interest in acquiring material from Wellington House despite enthusiasm within the India Office in London. Hirtzel complained to Austen Chamberlain that he could not 'help thinking that the G. of I. undervalue propaganda, both at home & abroad'.<sup>117</sup> Whereas China was taking 250,000 copies of *Cheng Pao* (a Chinese equivalent of *al-Haqīqah*), the Indian authorities were only asking for 19,000 copies of *al-Haqīqah* for all of India.<sup>118</sup> They were dubious about its value as propaganda and did not like being asked to pay for their copies by Whitehall. As it was largely distributed without charge it was a loss-making enterprise with unproven benefits as far as Delhi was concerned. In fact, local feedback indicated that it was held in higher esteem when it was bought rather than given away for free. As a result the arrangements for its distribution changed in 1917 as Chapter Two will explain.

Whilst it was met with ambivalence by the Delhi government, in Basra *al-Haqīqah* was considered a success. Sir Percy Lake wrote that it had been 'most favourably received. There is a ready sale for it in towns and the proceeds pay the cost of the agency and distribution'.<sup>119</sup> He requested a 'separate Arabic literary supplement' to go alongside it. This was the genesis of *El Kowkab*, another propagandist paper produced by British officials but this time from Cairo. Whilst intended to complement *al-Haqīqah*, Cairo thought it best to keep the association secret as *al-Haqīqah* 'is obviously produced by us'.<sup>120</sup> *El Kowkab* was first issued on 21 November 1916 and continued in production for

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<sup>116</sup> '100 Samples from Correspondence received at Wellington House', TNA INF 4/5.

<sup>117</sup> Hirtzel to Chamberlain, 29 August 1916, BL IO L/PS/10/581/353.

<sup>118</sup> Hirtzel to Viceroy, 30 August 1916, BL IO L/PS/10/581/354.

<sup>119</sup> Lake to Secretary of State for India, 25 July 1916, BL IO L/PS/11/110.

<sup>120</sup> Clayton to Hogarth, 30 September 1916, BL IO L/PS/11/110.

the remainder of the war. Its policy was ‘specially pro-Arab and anti-Turk’, emphasising, for example, Turkish oppression of Arabs in Syria and Turkey’s pan-Turanian ambitions.<sup>121</sup> The Arab Bureau also produced other propaganda on an ad hoc basis including a pamphlet on the ‘Moshi document’ in Turkish and Arabic (regarding purported German efforts to suppress Islam in East Africa) and leaflets for ‘dropping from aeroplanes in Palestine, Syria, and the Hejaz’ conveying war news and appealing to Arab soldiers to desert.<sup>122</sup>

*El Kowkab* was a local publication, edited and printed by British officials, but largely written by Arabs for Arabs. Neither did it contain any pictorial content indicating that away from London the idea of the ‘Muslim mind’ expounded by Long and resulting in the simplistic propaganda found in *al-Haqīqah*, gave way to something more sophisticated. In contrast, beyond Cook’s pamphlet, there is no evidence that London produced written material directed at educated Muslims. To the extent that an approach existed in this regard, it appears to have been to attempt to avoid negative comment in the press and in pamphlets aimed at allies and neutrals that could end up being repeated in the vernacular press or conveyed via enemy propaganda to a Muslim audience, counteracting the desired image of Britain as Islam’s friend and protector. As will be seen in the next section, however, this approach was not consistently applied.

## ***1.6 Armenia***

Whereas the German atrocities committed in Belgium and France between August and October 1914 resulted in approximately 6,500 deaths, it is estimated that between 800,000 and 1.2 million Armenians died in the Ottoman Empire in 1915 as a result of an officially orchestrated Turkish policy of massacre and

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<sup>121</sup> Report on Moslem Propaganda, 11 February 1917, BL IO L/PS/11/110.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

deportation aimed at eradicating the Ottoman Armenian population.<sup>123</sup> The massacres began in early April, and by 27 April the Foreign Office was aware of them and warily considering its response.<sup>124</sup> The Russian Ambassadors in Rome and Washington had been instructed by their government to support the 'Armenian protest' and the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs sought a joint message from the Allied Powers condemning Ottoman activities. Meanwhile, Sir Cecil Spring Rice, in Washington, reported that the 'matter is receiving [the] attention of [the] United States Government'.<sup>125</sup> The Foreign Office prevaricated. Grey advised that 'we do not possess sufficiently trustworthy data on which to base such a message, and that it is doubtful if the publication of a message would have the desired effect [of stopping them]'.<sup>126</sup> Despite further evidence of what were already being referred to as 'massacres', the Foreign Office had also received advice from Salonica and Cairo indicating that Turkish action was a response to Armenian insurrection. Sir Henry McMahon wrote that the Turks were 'having considerable trouble with Armenians [with] the latter's [sic.] having risen in several places'.<sup>127</sup>

Within a month, however, the Foreign Office found itself no longer able to equivocate. It is likely that a number of factors were at play. As well as pressure from the Russians and French, the fate of the Ottoman Armenians had garnered much attention and concern in the US where there had been widespread coverage of the massacres because of the continued presence within the Ottoman Empire of American missionaries and diplomats, for example, the American Ambassador, Henry Morgenthau, who sent home a number of reports. Another potential reason, identified by some historians, was concern within the Foreign Office that

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<sup>123</sup> For figures see Alan Kramer, 'Combatants and Noncombatants: Atrocities, Massacres, and War Crimes' in John Horne (ed.), *A Companion to World War I* (Chichester, 2012), pp. 188-201.

<sup>124</sup> Foreign Office Minute on 'Massacre of Armenians by Turks', 27 April 1915, TNA FO 371/2488/51010.

<sup>125</sup> Spring Rice to Foreign Office, 1 May 1915, TNA FO 371/2488/53153.

<sup>126</sup> Grey to Bertie, 11 May 1915, TNA FO 371/2488/58350.

<sup>127</sup> McMahon to Foreign Office, 13 May 1915, TNA FO 371/2488/59096.

Allied favour in America was being undermined by Russian persecution of Jews in Poland and Lithuania, and a means of counteracting it was to deflect attention onto atrocities being committed by the Central Powers.<sup>128</sup> The government's position may also have hardened because the events coincided with the launch of the Dardanelles campaign and a growing willingness to take a more aggressive stance towards their Turkish foe. However, in the drafting of the joint statement, Whitehall remained consistent in its concern to ensure that the sensitivities of the Empire's Muslims were not upset by their condemnation. The original draft referred to 'crimes committed by Turkey against Christianity and civilisation'.<sup>129</sup> The British ambassador to Paris, Francis Bertie, suggested that it would be 'well, from a British point of view, to omit from the declaration ... the word "Christianity"'.<sup>130</sup> Grey agreed, and the final wording, given to the press on 23 May for publication in the following day's papers, excluded the entire phrase 'against Christianity and civilisation'.<sup>131</sup>

Whitehall's cautious approach was overtaken to some extent when Viscount James Bryce addressed a House of Lords debate on the subject on 6 October 1915. Bryce, an elder statesman of seventy-seven, had headed the committee of enquiry into German atrocities in Belgium and Northern France resulting in the eponymous report of May 1915. As well as the acclaim and respect he had garnered for the Bryce Report, his unimpeachable reputation had been forged during a long career as a scholar and respected professor of jurisprudence. He was also widely regarded as an expert on the subject of Armenia having first

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<sup>128</sup> See Sanders and Taylor, p.178 and David Miller, 'The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire: A History of the Blue Book', *The RUSI Journal*, 150: 4 (2005), pp. 36-43, p.40. This is supported, for example, by a Memorandum issued by the Newspaper Proprietors' Association editors who warned 'Russia ... is not popular, having alienated Catholics on the one hand by her doings in Galicia, and Jews on the other by her treatment of the Jewish question' (TNA INF 4/1B). The document is undated but its contents indicate late 1915/early 1916.

<sup>129</sup> Buchanan to Grey, 11 May 1915, TNA FO 371/2488/58387.

<sup>130</sup> Bertie to Foreign Office, 20 May 1915, TNA FO 371/2488/63095.

<sup>131</sup> Press Notice, 23 May 1915, TNA FO 371/2488/63095. The Russians subsequently sought to replace the phrase with 'against humanity and civilisation' but the Foreign Office had already published the statement in its prior form and it was left at that.

travelled there in the 1870s and subsequently taken an interest in the question of Armenian independence. The fate of Armenians, Bulgarians and Macedonians had been the subject of popular agitation in Britain for a number of years. Interest had peaked and waned at various points during the previous fifty years or so. The ‘Bulgarian horrors’ of 1876 and the Armenian massacres of 1894 marked periods of particular interest. When the Young Turks came to power it was hoped that the situation would improve, but further massacres in 1909 had quashed these hopes.

Bryce’s appeal chimed with Masterman, himself a Liberal reformer, and a pamphlet, *Armenian Atrocities: The Murder of a Nation*, was published in late 1915 reproducing Bryce’s speech and elaborated upon in a subsequent section by the young historian, Arnold Toynbee. Toynbee had been employed by Wellington House since 1 May 1915 as an assistant to Gilbert Parker. His brief was therefore intimately connected with disseminating information to America, as well as understanding the nature and form of topics likely to appeal to an American audience. The choice of Toynbee as author of the pamphlet leaves little doubt as to whom the primary recipient was intended to be, and his American-gearred propaganda is evident from the distinctions that can be drawn between his section and Bryce’s.<sup>132</sup> The latter’s section was based on his House of Lords speech and, in line with Britain’s broader political interests, he was careful to assert that the massacres were a result of a ‘policy which, as far as can be ascertained, has been entertained for some considerable time by the gang of unscrupulous adventurers who are now in possession of the Government of the Turkish Empire’.<sup>133</sup> He blamed the massacres not on the inherent inability of Orientals or Muslims to rule subject races, nor on their innate barbarity, but on the degenerate government of the Young Turks. In this, his approach accorded with that of those more intimately associated with Britain’s imperial strategy,

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<sup>132</sup> Unlike Bryce, it does not appear that Toynbee had any personal interest in Armenia. See W.H. McNeill, *Arnold J. Toynbee: A Life* (Oxford, 1989), p.73.

<sup>133</sup> Arnold Toynbee, *Armenian Atrocities: The Murder of a Nation* (London, 1915), p.6.

such as the Earl of Cromer, who also contributed to the 6 October House of Lords debate, and had observed privately the previous week to his colleague Lord Crewe that his motivation in doing so was to ensure that the massacres should be given the 'utmost publicity' as they let 'the educated Mahommedans in India know what is the nature of the Turkish government, and so bring home to their minds that it would be a great mistake in any way to identify the cause of Islam with that of Turkey'.<sup>134</sup>

Bryce referred to the earlier massacres undertaken during the reign of Abdülhamid II but stated that they were on a small scale compared to the current CUP instigated atrocities. He reinforced his point by stating:

There was no Moslem passion against the Armenian Christians. All was done by the will of the Government, and done not from any religious fanaticism, but simply because they wished, for reasons purely political, to get rid of a non-Moslem element which impaired the homogeneity of the Empire, and constituted an element that might not always submit to oppression .... So far as can be made out, though of course the baser natures have welcomed and used the opportunities for plunder which slaughter and deportations afford, these massacres have been viewed by the better sort of religious Moslems with horror rather than with sympathy.<sup>135</sup>

Bryce was attentive to Muslim sensibilities, reflecting official concern about retaining Muslim sympathies within the Empire. In contrast, Toynbee was much more heavy handed. He observed, for example, that the Armenians were commercially minded and, hence, thrived in the midst of 'a rather stupid, conservatively inclined Turkish population'.<sup>136</sup> He repeatedly emphasised the virtues of the Armenian race and dismissed the Turk. Thus, he wrote that 'the Armenians were people of property, property well earned by intelligent industry, and the indigent Moslem of the slums had always resented the prosperity which

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<sup>134</sup> Cromer to Crewe, 2 October 1915, TNA FO 371/2488/14362.

<sup>135</sup> Toynbee, *Armenian Atrocities*, p.7.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., p.20.



Allah had permitted to the subject infidel'.<sup>137</sup> He was keen to emphasise that they were fellow-Christians and, therefore, unlike the Turks, had the same sensibilities as 'the middle-class population of any town in England or France'.<sup>138</sup> In a section examining the fate of academics from an Armenian college in Anatolia he observed that these colleges were 'every bit as refined, as cultured, as civilised as the atmosphere of our schools and colleges in Western Europe. Their humanising influence was one of the most beneficent factors in the Ottoman Empire'.<sup>139</sup>

Whereas the Armenians were 'like us', the Turks were 'orientals' governed by lust and depravity, which explained, according to Toynbee, the treatment of Armenian women, who were either raped by their guards or sold into harems. The passages implied that the traits shown by some barbaric Turks were shared by all. For example, Toynbee wrote,

Abundant news has come from Constantinople itself of [girls] being sold for a few shillings in the open markets of the capital ... These were Christian women, as civilised and refined as the women of Western Europe, and they were enslaved into degradation.<sup>140</sup>

As the march of exiles reached Aleppo the 'victims suffered a change of tormentors. The Kurds lingered in the hills, and the Bedawin [sic.] Arabs took up the role'.<sup>141</sup> Thus more Muslims were held culpable for the atrocities. The only help that was forthcoming was from other Christians, for example, in Aleppo the Christian population brought food and clothes for the refugees.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid., p.34.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., p.57.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p.103.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p.40. See Chapter Four for Pickthall's insights on Toynbee's assertions.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., p.61.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., p.63.

The final chapter is called 'The Attitude of Germany'. Bryce had warned Toynbee to tread carefully regarding German culpability, advising him that the pamphlet should be 'an impeachment of the Turks not ... a "campaign document" against the Germans. We want to get the Germans to stop the massacres and to try to make them responsible is not the best way to do that'.<sup>143</sup> In the pamphlet Toynbee argued that whilst the Germans might not have initiated the crimes, this was faint praise 'for it is clear that, whoever commanded the atrocities, the Germans never made a motion to countermand them, when they could have been stopped at the start by a single word'.<sup>144</sup> He went so far as to suggest that the Germans might have endorsed the atrocities on the basis that if the Armenian population was annihilated, the Turks would have been even more at Germany's mercy as the Armenians were 'the only native element in the Ottoman Empire with a European training and a European character' and hence without them the commercial life of the Ottoman Empire would be left in ruin and more accessible to German exploitation.<sup>145</sup> However, Toynbee invited the Germans to rebut such suspicions by acting immediately to save that element of the Armenian race still alive.

Toynbee's section of the pamphlet stands out as exceptional in the context of the pamphlets from both the early half and the latter half of the war. He was especially keen to emphasise differences between Muslims and Christians and depicted all Turks, not just the Young Turk administration, as culpable. His stance may have been partly the result of an all-out effort to ensure by any means, however inflammatory, that the humanitarian scale of the disaster was brought home but it seems much more likely, bearing in mind Toynbee's role within Wellington House, that his rhetoric was permissible because the pamphlet was unequivocally directed towards an American audience. It is also worth recalling that a substantive part of the evidence used by Toynbee came from

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<sup>143</sup> Bryce to Toynbee, 18/19th October 1915, TNA FO 96/207/136.

<sup>144</sup> Toynbee, *Armenian Atrocities*, p.108.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p.116.

American missionary sources, whose natural inclination was to view events through a religious prism, a conflict between their own Christian faith and that of the Turks.

Toynbee's pamphlet was Wellington House's only publication on the massacres until the following November when the 'Blue Book' was produced.<sup>146</sup> This was a monumental tome, amounting to over 700 pages of mostly eyewitness accounts of the atrocities.<sup>147</sup> Toynbee and Bryce endorsed a fact-finding approach, believing that the evidence should, and could, speak for itself and that it was 'better to avoid any expression of moral censure at this stage'.<sup>148</sup> This fitted with the, all-important, American approach orchestrated by the American Missions Board, whose stated business was 'not politics but philanthropy; not railing but relief'.<sup>149</sup> Accordingly, Toynbee looked far and wide for independent (non-Armenian) eyewitness accounts, and although the substantive portion was obtained from American missionaries (as he himself conceded) he also obtained testimony from sources in Switzerland, France, Italy and Egypt, and was rigorous in his efforts to verify and cross-check the various accounts and to present them without embellishment. Unsurprisingly, this was a time-consuming process and resulted in a lengthy document. When Stephen Gaselee at the Foreign Office's News Department was finally sent a proof in August, he was disconcerted by its size and observed that it would more likely serve as material for other publications, than be read widely in itself.<sup>150</sup> He also noted that in some of the documents there 'are phrases which would better be omitted'.<sup>151</sup> It is likely that

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<sup>146</sup> 'Blue Books' were a series of Parliamentary and Foreign Office printed documents published in blue covers and covering a wide variety of subjects under political or social investigation. Its actual title was *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire 1915-1916*.

<sup>147</sup> The length of time it took to produce may well explain Wellington's House's silence on the subject between the 1915 pamphlet and the publication of the Blue Book in November 1916.

<sup>148</sup> Bryce to Toynbee, 14 June 1916, TNA FO 96/205/396.

<sup>149</sup> Rockwell to Toynbee, 19 January 1917, TNA FO 96/207/99.

<sup>150</sup> Memorandum by Stephen Gaselee on Blue Book proof, 6 August 1916, TNA FO 395/40/150732.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

he was referring to the expression of anti-Muslim sentiment. However, he believed that the historical value consisted in the fact that they were largely verbatim accounts and were therefore better left untouched. Thereafter, on 18 August Robert Cecil, Private Secretary to Lord Grey, confirmed that the Foreign Office approved the publication and that the best way to achieve this was to lay the document before Parliament.<sup>152</sup> On 23 August, Cecil told the House of Commons that ‘a valuable Report, consisting chiefly of a collection of documentary evidence, has been prepared at the suggestion of Lord Bryce by Mr Arnold Toynbee, and will be laid before Parliament in due course’.<sup>153</sup>

Since the war, the Blue Book has often been regarded as one of the most symbolic of Wellington House’s wartime propaganda publications. However, contemporary documents indicate a lack of clarity regarding by whom, and why, it was commissioned. David Miller has argued persuasively that there was a distinct lack of enthusiasm for the project within the Foreign Office, and he contends that it was likely Bryce who drove the project for humanitarian reasons.<sup>154</sup> It is plausible, however, that figures like Cromer, old-school imperialists, whose primary concern was India, were instrumental in instigating its production. In the 6 October debate in the House of Lords, he and Lord Crewe suggested to Bryce that the Consular Reports on which he based his account of the atrocities should be ‘laid before Parliament or otherwise published’.<sup>155</sup> This was a dangerous strategy. If the heavy-handed ‘clash of civilisations’ approach adopted by Arnold Toynbee in his 1915 pamphlet continued to be pursued, it was surely more likely to alienate India’s educated Muslims than endear them to the Allied cause. In either case, by February 1916, Toynbee had been appointed as Bryce’s assistant and was making contact with

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<sup>152</sup> Memorandum by Robert Cecil on Blue Book proof, 18 August 1916, TNA FO 395/40/150732.

<sup>153</sup> Memorandum regarding publication of Blue Book, TNA FO 395/40/168932.

<sup>154</sup> See Miller, ‘Blue Book’, p.38.

<sup>155</sup> Statement by Cromer, 6 October 1915, Hansard, 5th ser. (Lords), vol.19, cc.1004.

potential witnesses on ‘Lord Bryce’s behalf’.<sup>156</sup> Although he put himself forward as working for Bryce, his letters emanated from Wellington House, for whom he remained a full time employee on a salary of £330 a year, suggesting that even if the Foreign Office was not the instigator, the project was condoned and supported by them from the outset.<sup>157</sup>

Toynbee’s status as a Wellington House employee, tasked with American-related propaganda, strongly suggests that, like his 1915 pamphlet, the primary purpose of the Blue Book, at least from the government’s perspective, if not Bryce’s himself, was as war propaganda aimed at America. In 1922, Toynbee himself acknowledged its propagandist, as opposed to humanitarian, purpose but held to the position that this did not undermine the good faith with which he and Bryce undertook the project, nor its accuracy.<sup>158</sup> Certainly, the Blue Book continues to be regarded today as the largest single source of information on what happened. However, after the war, Toynbee recognised that he had done little to represent the Turkish side of events (however flimsy their justification may have been) and felt that he had betrayed ‘historical truth’ with the ‘lopsidedness’ of his account.<sup>159</sup> Like much of Wellington House’s propaganda, Toynbee’s approach when it came to uncomfortable facts was to ignore them. For example, when the Turks published photographic evidence showing stockpiled weaponry in the hands of Armenian rebels, Toynbee dismissed it out of hand as ‘mostly fakes’.<sup>160</sup> Further, whilst Bryce’s humanitarian concerns were undoubtedly sincere, it is difficult not to also read into his motivation a racial hatred for the Turks. In a private letter to Masterman, his fellow Liberal, he referred to them as ‘despicable

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<sup>156</sup> See, for example, Toynbee to Gibbons, 22 February 1916, TNA FO 96/205/73.

<sup>157</sup> The figure for Toynbee’s salary comes from McNeill, p.72. Toynbee’s letters requesting evidence can be found in TNA FO 96/205-208.

<sup>158</sup> See Gunter, p.11.

<sup>159</sup> See McNeill, p.74.

<sup>160</sup> Toynbee to Gaselee, 29 November 1916, TNA FO 395/40.

wretches'.<sup>161</sup> In another he expressed the hope that the Blue Book 'may materially help to blow Turks and Turcophiles out of the water'.<sup>162</sup> Such factors, together with the pejorative post-war attitude towards Wellington House's activities, have cast a shadow over the Blue Book, such that its authenticity continues to be a matter of doubt. For example, when the Armenian Centre commissioned an opinion from leading human rights barrister, Geoffrey Robertson Q.C., in 2009, he stated that he was unable to place any reliance on the Blue Book because of 'Bryce's record as a propagandist'.<sup>163</sup>

Although the Blue Book continues to be a topic for discussion and debate, during the war it never achieved the status or the public recognition of the Bryce Report. But it must be emphasised that it was serving a different purpose. Whereas the Bryce Report had been commissioned directly by Asquith, was widely circulated throughout the world, and played an important role in articulating the rationale for Britain's belligerency, it is difficult not to conclude that official endorsement of the Blue Book was rather half-hearted, that it was produced because the Foreign Office thought they 'ought' to do it as a strand of their American diplomacy and/or because it might serve their Indian strategic concerns. This is not to say that there were not many who were genuinely concerned for the Armenians' plight, including within Whitehall. However, the period of 1915 and 1916 was one in which there remained a degree of tentativeness in British willingness to condemn the Turks and their actions. The inclination was to look back towards their historic friendship rather than their current belligerency or post-war relationship although, as shall be seen in the subsequent chapters, by the summer of 1916, and certainly by the Blue Book's publication in November, the Foreign Office's interests were becoming increasingly aligned to Bryce's humanitarian ones. The prospect of the dismantlement of the Ottoman Empire,

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<sup>161</sup> Bryce to Masterman, 21 September 1916, TNA FO 96/206/249.

<sup>162</sup> Bryce to Masterman, 28 September 1916, TNA FO 96/206/275.

<sup>163</sup> Geoffrey Robertson QC, *Was there an Armenian Genocide? Opinion for the Armenian Centre, October 2009* ([www.groong.usc.edu/](http://www.groong.usc.edu/): accessed 24/6/2015), p.20.

and Britain's need to position herself in this process, meant that condemning the Turks as murderers, and as unfit to govern the Armenians, was increasingly a position that sat comfortably with government objectives.

A final pamphlet, *Syria During March, 1916: Her Miseries and Disasters*, dating from the latter half of 1916, also requires consideration.<sup>164</sup> It has been argued above that in the first half of the war Britain's attitude towards the Ottoman Empire was relatively benign and its propaganda efforts in this regard lacked direction. As late as September 1916 (the date of the Third Report) very little was being produced in anticipation of Britain's global positioning after the war. The Syria pamphlet, however, indicates that approaches were changing. Written in the wake of the inception of the Arab Revolt, the anonymous writer highlighted that the Turkish government was carrying out similar atrocities against Syria's Arabs as had been conducted against the Armenians, thereby demonstrating the Young Turks' cynical exploitation of Islam to conceal their real agenda, which was to consolidate the 'ottomanisation' of the Empire and strengthen Turkish nationalism:

“First we kill the Armenians,” said a Turkish gendarme to a Danish Sister serving with the German Red Cross, “then the Greeks, and then the Kurds.” If this gendarme had been more intimately in the counsel of his superiors, he would not have failed to add: “And, last of all, the Arabs.”<sup>165</sup>

The pamphlet was thus a rebuttal of the German and Turkish call to jihad, and argued instead that it was a cover for a different agenda which put all Muslims who were not Turkish in opposition to the Turkish regime. The pamphlet claimed that the Turks hated the Arabs more than any other minority in their Empire:

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<sup>164</sup> Anon., *Syria During March, 1916: Her Miseries and Disasters* (London: 1916).

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., p.4.

The Young Turks bear deeper malice against the Arabs than against any other race in Turkey. The Arabs are as good Moslems as the Turks themselves (we speak of the Turkish nation and not of the Young Turk clique, whose contempt for all religion is notorious); the Arabs were the original creators of Islamic culture and the leading race in the Islamic world, at a time when the Turks were (what they have always remained at heart) a tribe of predatory barbarians in the Central Asiatic steppes. In spite of their disastrous political subjection to the Turkish invaders, the Arabs have to this day retained their superiority in intellect and civilisation; and, further (what is a still more heinous crime in Young Turkish eyes), they are numerically the second strongest race in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>166</sup>

It also suggested a fraternity between Arabic peoples from different areas and indicated that they should unite and rise up, as Sherif Hussein had done in the Hejaz, in opposition to the Turkish regime. ‘Mecca fighting for her life against the menace of “Ottomanisation”!’ declared the pamphlet.<sup>167</sup> ‘Nothing could expose more glaringly the cynical fraudulency of the Young Turkish Djihad’.<sup>168</sup>

The remainder of the pamphlet summarised various articles from Cairo newspaper, *Mokattam*, and information from an unidentified eyewitness who had recently visited Syria, setting out details of the hardships endured by the Syrians as a consequence of Ottoman rule and Ottoman participation in the war.<sup>169</sup> It depicted the Ottomans as poor administrators and cruel and callous masters. Whereas Syrians living in Egypt were ‘enjoying comfort, peace and luxury’ under British control, those still in Syria were suffering extreme hardship including famine, poverty and lawlessness.<sup>170</sup> Indeed, the famine in Syria in 1915 and 1916, a result not only of the war but of a vast locust invasion, is estimated to have resulted in the deaths of up to 300,000 Syrians.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Anon., *Syria*, p.4.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., p.5.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Quite possibly Sykes’s collaborator, A.P. Albina. See Chapter Three.

<sup>170</sup> Anon., *Syria*, p.8.

<sup>171</sup> Rogan, p.291.





The dominant theme that emerges from Wellington House's output between 1914 and the end of 1916 is the depiction of the war as a battle for civilisation. For Britain, that meant the promotion of the values they viewed as their imperial heritage and, not surprisingly, it was a battle waged overwhelmingly against Germany. Germany was the gross violator of Western civilisation, the aggressor and the perpetrator of atrocities. The British were ready and willing to attach the same characteristics to the Germans as they had applied in the nineteenth century to Asians and Africans. They were barbarians, throwbacks, primitives. However, somewhat contradictorily, Germans warranted particular opprobrium because, as Parker put it, they had 'sinned against the light', in other words, they were Europeans who should have known better.<sup>172</sup>

In contrast, the Turks, rather than being condemned, were to be pitied and despised for falling prey to Prussianism. To an extent, this approach reflected the continued flourishing of assumptions regarding the inadequacies of 'Oriental' races. These were assumptions that had waxed and waned for centuries, but which were most recently manifest in the context of late-Victorian imperialism, where non-white races had come to be viewed as both culturally and racially inferior to Europeans. In this formulation the Turks, unlike the Germans, simply did not know any better. However, British ambivalence was not just a reflection of static cultural assumptions. It was also a reaction to fears of pan-Islamism and the destabilisation of the traditional balance of power in Europe. Military events in the Dardanelles and in Mesopotamia added further nuance, stimulating anxiety regarding the maintenance of prestige. Always, India and the potential ramifications of Islamic unrest within the Empire stemming from Britain's hostile relationship with the Ottomans, lay at the heart of her concerns.

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<sup>172</sup> Parker, *Crucible*, p.343.

In 1916, a more concerted approach emerged, both in terms of Ottoman-related propaganda aimed at allies and neutrals, and propaganda aimed more widely at the 'Muslim world'. This greater focus and organisation was undoubtedly part of the natural evolution of Wellington House's functions, particularly in light of its close affiliation with the Foreign Office, as it settled into its stride as a propaganda machine. The creation of *al-Haqīqah*, the publication of the Blue Book and the Syria pamphlet, are all evidence of a growing appreciation of what was required in the changing strategic climate. *Al-Haqīqah* was a response to concerns about prestige and Anglo-Islamic relations, the Blue Book secured common ground with America and, like the Syria pamphlet, began to pave the way for a world order after the war where Ottoman Asia no longer existed. However, it was only in 1917, when the loyalty of the Empire's Muslims seemed more assured, and the post-war carve-up of the Turkish Empire had become an inevitability, that Wellington House gave full rein to its anti-Ottoman propaganda, as shall be seen in the next chapter.

## Chapter Two – Wellington House, 1917-1918

As the war progressed Wellington House's activities became increasingly varied. It prepared weekly summaries of American and other foreign newspapers, produced photographic propaganda for publication in neutral newspapers, arranged the production and exhibition of films, and produced weekly, fortnightly, and monthly illustrated papers in a number of foreign languages:

Among other ingenious by-products, Wellington House got sets of lantern slides prepared, with a stock lecture for each set. These were for use in the rural districts of various countries, such as Russia. They also got out a great many picture postcards, principally for Russia and Italy. Maps, diagrams, posters, gramophone records, cigarette cards, model tanks for ash-trays, calendars showing German crimes and British victories, bookmarkers and blotting slips too were turned out.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the variety of by-products, Wellington House's output was still perceived as primarily literary, and after Lloyd George, 'a man convinced of the power of propaganda', became Prime Minister in December 1916 steps were quickly taken to attempt to change this.<sup>2</sup> Lloyd George asked an old friend, Robert Donald, editor of *The Daily Chronicle*, to prepare a report on existing propaganda arrangements, knowing very well that he was a proponent of change and disliked the literary emphasis at Wellington House (as well as its intimacy with the Foreign Office). Like other newspaper men, Donald advocated a less intellectual and more sensationalist approach and was, for example, a keen advocate of atrocity propaganda. Nevertheless, his first review in January 1917 was mild, and he praised the work undertaken highly. Accordingly, when the propaganda effort was restructured and Lloyd George set up the Department of Information in February, putting John Buchan in charge, the Foreign Office retained the greatest degree of control over overseas propaganda matters, much to the chagrin of newspaper bosses such as Lords Beaverbrook and Northcliffe, who 'conceived

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<sup>1</sup> 'Mr Masterman's Department at Wellington House' in *British Propaganda During the War*, IWM 49/3 (41).0, p.2. This document is an anonymous, retrospective analysis of wartime propaganda.

<sup>2</sup> Sanders and Taylor, p.11

themselves to be better qualified than permanent officials who were unversed in the techniques of mass persuasion'.<sup>3</sup>

Buchan left Masterman to his own devices and he continued much as before. In fact, the procedures put into motion by Masterman in the first half of the war came to fruition in 1917 as Wellington House's output reached its zenith. According to information gleaned from the Wellington House Schedule of Literature, 39% of its literary output was produced in 1917.<sup>4</sup> An analysis produced after the war claimed that during ten months of 1917 over 40 million items of all sorts were issued.<sup>5</sup> However, as 1917 progressed, Donald and other newspaper men, notably C.P. Scott (of the *Manchester Guardian*) and Lord Burnham (of *The Daily Telegraph*), as well as Northcliffe and Beaverbrook, became increasingly annoyed at their perceived exclusion from the Department's activities. This resulted in Donald being commissioned to undertake a second review in October 1917, a much more vitriolic affair, during which it became apparent that he and his backers would be satisfied with nothing less than a complete overhaul of the propaganda organisation. Donald made it clear that as far as he was concerned 'the most potent influence of all is the Press of each country, and this is a weapon of which [Wellington House] has not taken full advantage'.<sup>6</sup> He proposed:

From now onward, we should reduce to a minimum all our publishing arrangements and article-writing, and concentrate on aggressive propaganda in the Press of every neutral country, by telegrams, etc., remove misunderstandings by similar means in Allied countries, and carry on penetrative propaganda into enemy countries on a huge scale.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Sanders and Taylor, p.54.

<sup>4</sup> See Table on p.93.

<sup>5</sup> 'Mr Masterman's Department at Wellington House', IWM British Propaganda During the War 49/3 (41).0, p.3.

<sup>6</sup> Department of Information: Inquiry into the Extent and Efficiency of Propaganda by Robert Donald, 14 December 1917, TNA INF 4/4B.

<sup>7</sup> Department of Information: Comments on Reports by Colonel Buchan and Mr Masterman, 6 January 1918, TNA INF 4/4B.

That Donald's proposals were taken up is evident not just from the establishment of the Ministry of Information under Beaverbrook in March 1918 (in which Donald himself was given charge of propaganda in neutral countries).<sup>8</sup> A consideration of the Schedule of Literature also indicates the declining emphasis on pamphlets and books. In 1918 output of literary material amounted to 27% of the total war output, 12% less than in 1917.<sup>9</sup> The reduction would be much greater if the number of publications that consisted of American editions of pre-existing Wellington House works were taken out of the 27% figure.

The significant number of American editions reflected a belief that even though the US had now joined the Allies the need for British propaganda there was greater than ever in order to provide Americans with information about war events and also to ensure that the desired representations of Britain's aims and objectives were projected. Professor Dixon, who was in charge of US propaganda at Wellington House from September 1916 and replaced Gilbert Parker, summarised the position in November 1917 when he observed,

the need for propaganda [in the US] was never greater than at the present time and it is essential for the removal of misunderstandings between America and Britain – sources of friction which continually arise and also in answer to questions as to the true aims of Britain in the war, that is whether they are imperialistic or not, whether we are not out to secure more territory and so forth.<sup>10</sup>

Conveying an impression of herself as an imperial power without imperial ambitions, however paradoxical this may appear, had become one of the overriding preoccupations of the propagandists as shall be seen in this chapter.

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<sup>8</sup> Donald's appointment was short lived. He resigned, citing competing work pressures, in April 1918. See TNA INF 4/8.

<sup>9</sup> See Table on p.93.

<sup>10</sup> Report of Proceedings of meeting held at Wellington House 19 November 1917, TNA INF 4/11, p.2. One of the reasons for Dixon's appointment was that he had been a colleague of Wilson's at Princeton.

Both Buchan and Masterman were deeply frustrated by the results of Donald's second review. Complaining to Edward Carson (the Minister with responsibility for propaganda from September 1917 until the establishment of the Ministry in the following March) in December 1917, Buchan commented that Donald had criticised the Department's work without having done a comprehensive investigation and had been indiscreet in circulating his supposedly confidential findings to his friends in the press without having given the Department a chance to put forward its own reply. 'He has investigated a few branches, giving an hour or two to each; but he has passed judgment on all branches, including those which he did not visit. Such a method could scarcely be productive of accurate criticism or valuable suggestions'.<sup>11</sup> Masterman believed that Donald had failed to understand the nature of his work or to acknowledge its success. Whereas Donald viewed the organisation as equivalent to a profligate and badly organised business, Masterman explained that a comparison with an election campaign was more apt. 'I would ask you to judge the work, not as a business proposition but rather on the line of an international election campaign, carried on by the two parties. In such a campaign there must be a large amount of waste. This occurs on both sides'.<sup>12</sup> The fact that activities had largely been covert made it difficult to show tangible results and this too compromised Buchan and Masterman's position. Masterman implored Donald to look at the countless letters, expressing appreciation for his work and demanding more, as evidence of the success of the organisation:

The whole justification of this [Wellington House's work] is that we appear to be giving what the people do want. There is a continual demand for it, a continual demand for more, continual statements of the effect of this on public opinion in the different parts where it goes, especially in the United States, continuous evidence of the use of it in preparation of speeches, sermons, leaders in newspaper offices

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<sup>11</sup> Buchan to Carson, 28 December 1917, TNA INF 4/1B.

<sup>12</sup> Propaganda Enquiry: Evidence taken at Wellington House 14 November 1917, TNA INF 4/11, p.16.

and of converts made by it and of the necessity of the work and of the desire for more.<sup>13</sup>

Donald responded by proffering counterfactual scenarios to illustrate what would have happened if Wellington House's propaganda had been more effective, for example, that America would have entered the war earlier and Russia would not have deserted the Allies.<sup>14</sup> There was evidently little common ground.

That the newspaper men won the battle to control British propaganda in late 1917 is indisputable. For the remainder of the war the overriding policy was to use the press to convey information to everyone, not just decision makers but the masses, educated or otherwise. It was no longer simply the articulation of values and beliefs held dear to the author for transmission to like-minded elites but a deliberate attempt to direct the thoughts of large swathes of the world's population with the primary aim of preserving and promoting Britain's position in the peace talks to come. As one post-war commentator explained, the Ministry's function was to provide the mortar by which the bricks of peace were to be constructed:

The peace and security of the world do not depend on armaments and diplomatic combinations, but on the friendliness and goodwill of the peoples of the world. National prejudices can be removed only if one nation is told in detail what has been done, is being done and will be done in the future by another nation.<sup>15</sup>

The most 'direct and straightforward means that could be found' were to be used 'for conveying a fact or the summary of an argument to immense masses, educated and uneducated'.<sup>16</sup> Pictures, both static and moving, were believed to be most effective. As the same post-war commentator observed, the power of

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<sup>13</sup> Report of Proceedings of meeting held at Wellington House 28 November 1917, TNA INF 4/11, p.13.

<sup>14</sup> Department of Information: Comments on Reports by Colonel Buchan and Mr Masterman 6 January 1918, TNA INF 4/4B.

<sup>15</sup> 'The Ministry of Information' in *British Propaganda During the War*, IWM 49/3 (41).0, p.3.

<sup>16</sup> 'The Ministry of Information' in *British Propaganda During the War*, IWM 49/3 (41).0, p.1.

cinema was seen to be in its mass appeal: ‘it speaks to the hearts of the duskiest aborigines and the smallest school-children’.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, with the establishment of the Ministry and the ascension of the newspaper men, Masterman and his team’s subtle, indirect approach became increasingly obsolete. Writing about the position in 1918, Ivor Nicholson, who had been at Wellington House in the pictorial department from the early days (and assisted Edward E. Long with *al-Haqīqah*), observed that with the changes brought about by the appointment of Max Aitken,

[T]hose who had started at Wellington House clung together and went on with the work and endeavoured to hold up the hands of the chief whom we had grown to like and respect. We all felt, I think, that Masterman had been unfairly treated by the late Government and the new Government and by some sections of the Press.<sup>18</sup>

Despite the creation of the Enemy Propaganda Department, Ottoman-related propaganda remained within the Ministry’s remit until the end of the war and, indeed, it is evident from the Schedule of Literature that pamphlets and books in typical Wellington House style continued in production in 1918, as did *al-Haqīqah* which remained under the control of Edward Long. This chapter will consider these publications and will be divided largely as Chapter One. It will start with a section on the continued focus on Germany as the ‘other’ against which Britain was to be understood and judged. As can be seen from the Table on page 93, rather than diminishing as other issues came to the fore, the obsession with German barbarity continued and, indeed, reached a peak in 1917. As the Allies achieved military victory in the East, and fears of a global jihad receded, the next section will consider how Wellington House addressed growing British confidence in the security of her Empire and prepared for post-war peace negotiations. In this regard, the ongoing importance of *al-Haqīqah* will be

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<sup>17</sup> ‘Cinema Films’ in British Propaganda During the War, IWM 49/3 (41).0, p.1.

<sup>18</sup> Ivor Nicholson, ‘An Aspect of British Official Wartime Propaganda’ in *The Cornhill Magazine*, May 1931, No.857, pps. 593-606, p.605.



considered and it will be argued that whilst Wellington House's pamphlets and books came to be viewed as increasingly unnecessary, their pictorial propaganda was very much in keeping with the Ministry's new approach. Section 2.3 will turn to changing depictions of the Turks, as strategic exigencies dictated a dramatically different agenda to that of the early years. Finally, section 2.4 will consider Armenia and the development of propaganda in relation to Turkish atrocities there.

*Table produced from an examination of Wellington House's  
Schedule of Literature<sup>19</sup>*

Wellington House Publications: Subject Matter	1914/ 1915	1916	1917	1918	Total	%
Outbreak/Causes/Justification	55	12	22	12	101	8.70
German 'Kultur' and History	28	13	27	18	86	7.40
Belgian/French Atrocities (inc. initial atrocities, subsequent occupation, forced labour etc.)	14	21	37	7	79	6.80
Other Central Power Atrocities within Europe (i.e., exc. Armenia and Africa, e.g., Poland, corpse conversion, Edith Cavell)	8	5	8	3	24	2.10
Armenia	2※	1	3	5	11	0.90
Treatment of Prisoners of War	8	17	14	8	47	4.00
United States (only those publications specifically addressing aspects of US role in war)	6	3	12	3	24	2.10
Russia	5	-	3	1	9	0.70
France/Italy	4	7	8	8	27	2.30
Eastern Europe/Balkans	3	2	10	3	18	1.50
Turkey	2	-	8	5	15	1.30
Gallipoli	1	1	-	-	2	0.20
African Campaigns	-	-	2	3	5	0.40
India	3	5	2	4	14	1.20
Ireland	3	8	8	1	20	1.70
Dominions	1	3	8	2	14	1.20
Jews/Zionism	-	-	3	11	14	1.20
Middle East	-	1	7	13	21	1.80
Ethics of War	4	-	1	-	5	0.40
British Ideals and Principles	-	6	13	12	31	2.70
British Imperialism (its strength and resources)	1	1	7	-	9	0.70

<sup>19</sup> This Table has been constructed using the Schedule of Wellington House Literature. It is not exhaustive and there are a number of reasons why it can only be taken as a rough guide. For example, the documents are uncategorised in the Schedule and the categories in the Table and allocation of pamphlets to these categories has been a subjective exercise and one that ignores the overlap in some pamphlets between categories. It is, however, the closest we can get to knowing what Wellington House produced in view of their covert practices and the lack of records.

※ Two editions of the same pamphlet.

Wellington House Publications: Subject Matter	1914/ 1915	1916	1917	1918	Total	%
German Imperialism (in Europe and particularly in Africa)	2	1	5	10	18	1.50
War at Sea (e.g., justification of blockades, achievements of Navy, submarines)	10	17	30	17	74	6.40
Air	-	1	7	1	9	0.70
Tanks	-	-	1	1	2	0.20
Economics and Trade (e.g., armaments production)	5	11	14	6	36	3.00
British Progress and Performance	8	11	31	19	69	6.00
German Performance	-	2	1	-	3	0.30
The Human Face/Soldiers at the Front	1	3	20	13	37	3.00
British Morale (e.g., how Britons are doing their bit, important speeches)	2	4	40	20	66	5.70
Belligerents Relationship with Catholics/Catholic Countries	1	6	19	1	27	2.30
Peace Terms/League of Nations	-	7	27	24	58	5.00
Cardinal Mercier (Archbishop of Malines) Letters and Sermons	1	4	3	-	8	0.70
<i>Reality</i> Magazine (4 page topical magazine)	-	-	25	42	67	5.80
Miscellaneous	11	31	32	39	113	9.70
<b>Total</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>458</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>1162</b>	100
Percentage of Total Over Entire War	16%	18%	39%	27%	100%	

## 2.1 Attitudes towards Germany

Wellington House continued to focus on Germany as a country whose people were the antithesis of honest, civilised Britons, by portraying their *Kultur* and history as one oriented around war, barbarity and the destruction of civilisation. Wellington House took this approach to new extremes in 1917 with the production of two pamphlets: *Microbe Culture in Bukarest* and *The Corpse Conversion Factory: A Peep Behind Enemy Lines*.<sup>20</sup> In the former the Germans were accused of ‘dastardly and devilish’ conduct involving the smuggling through diplomatic channels of high explosives and cultures of anthrax and glanders bacilli with the object of damaging Romanian property and spreading disease among her livestock.<sup>21</sup> The latter pamphlet was produced on the back of reports in the *Daily Mail* and *The Times* based on an article in a Berlin paper, *Lokal-Anzeiger*, on 10 April 1917. The *Lokal-Anzeiger*’s correspondent described a journey in which he passed a German factory:

[T]he great Army Group works for the utilisation of corpses. The fat that is obtained here is converted into lubricating oils, and everything else ground down in the bone mill to a powder that is used for mixing with pigs’ fodder and as manure.<sup>22</sup>

It was the German word for corpses, ‘kadaver’, capable in translation of meaning either human or animal remains, that captured the imagination of the British press, who chose to interpret it as referring to humans and cited the story as one more example of German depravity. Wellington House was aware of the possible misconstruction of ‘kadaver’ but they produced a pamphlet in any event and when they later acknowledged that they had made a mistake and the factory was indeed using only animal corpses, their reputation as ‘truth-tellers’ was

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<sup>20</sup> Anon., *Microbe Culture in Bukarest* (London, 1917) and Anon., *A ‘Corpse Conversion’ Factory: A Peep behind the German Lines* (London, 1917).

<sup>21</sup> Anon., *Microbe Culture*, p.3.

<sup>22</sup> Translation of extract from *Lokal-Anzeiger*, TNA FO 395/147/79731.

tarnished.<sup>23</sup> Whilst Wellington House's decision to publish this pamphlet is generally attributed to pressure from a belligerent press, this does not tell the full story as Foreign Office records indicate that the reason this story particularly appealed was because of its potential to influence Muslim opinion. Indeed, Edward Long wrote to the Foreign Office almost immediately after the story appeared, highlighting the potential value of the story and asking, 'do you not think it would be rather a good thing to use this for purposes of Oriental propaganda?'<sup>24</sup> In Long's opinion,

[A]mongst most Oriental races a feeling of horror would be induced against the Germans by the dissemination of such information concerning them, but if it could be proved that they have actually used the bodies of fallen Turkish soldiers in this ghastly manner, we should have in our hands a most valuable weapon for use against the Germans with all Moslem peoples.<sup>25</sup>

The critical factor was the use of the corpses specifically for pig-fodder in light of Muslim beliefs. As one of the Foreign Office's correspondents suggested, 'Remember how a less reason than this, caused the Indian Mutiny!'<sup>26</sup>

The Foreign Office was entirely amenable to Long's suggestion. Whilst he had sought to establish the truth of the matter before proceeding, the Foreign Office replied that although they could not ascertain if the story was true, as the pamphlet would have no outward sign of official endorsement (in customary Wellington House style), its veracity was not something which need delay publication: 'we see no reason why the proposed pamphlets should not be proceeded with, as they would in no case have the appearance of official publications'.<sup>27</sup> Far from being the victims of pressure from the press, the

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<sup>23</sup> See Wallace, p.174 and Waller, p.969. Arthur Ponsonby focused on this pamphlet in *Falsehood in Wartime*.

<sup>24</sup> Long to Montgomery, 19 April 1917, TNA FO 395/147.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Arbuthnot to FO, 18 April 1917, TNA FO 395/147.

<sup>27</sup> MWK (?) on behalf of Montgomery to Willson, 21 April 1917, TNA FO 395/147.

propagandists had their own reasons for producing the pamphlet and capitalised on the perceived ambiguity despite the potential, and in the event actual, damage to their reputation.<sup>28</sup>

The exploitation of falsehoods epitomised by the Corpse Conversion story was, as has been seen in the preceding chapter, not Wellington House's usual approach. Rather they attributed such methods specifically to German propagandists and took pride in their own honesty. A more typical example of a publication from the second half of the war is *Sidelights on Germany*.<sup>29</sup> Written in 1918 and published in London and New York, the author appraised German wartime writing with the intention of throwing light on their war psychology, morals and culture (and thereby 'damning them from their own mouths'). Although the basic premise was the same, this was a more muted, nuanced examination of *Kultur*, lacking the cruder stereotyping found in much of the earlier writing and drawn from contemporaneous material rather than broad historical analogy. It is notable that whilst there were no individual chapters addressing Germany's European aspirations, the book included distinct chapters on Germany's colonial aspirations and on their attitude towards the Middle East.

In the chapter on German imperialism an extract from the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* was cited as evidence of German attitudes towards British colonialism and of how they viewed their own style of imperialism in comparison:

Among the attributes of the nation who are called Huns by the hypocritical English, and Boches by the degenerate French, is a remarkable idealism, incomprehensible to our enemies, which irradiates the entire German people, from the palace to the workshop. This is why we do not merely regard the German colonies as trading settlements, as places where money may be made, or where the

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<sup>28</sup> The lack of truth in the pamphlet was acknowledged in parliament in 1925.

<sup>29</sup> Michael A. Morrison, *Sidelights on Germany: Studies of German Life and Character during the Great War, based on the Enemy Press* (London, 1918).

native races may be sucked dry. This is the Briton's way with his foreign possessions. For the German his colonies are lands of fable, shimmering in the magic of marvellous sunlight, virgin territory exercising a potent attraction for our youth, and in which we have unfurled the banner of Kultur and humanity.<sup>30</sup>

For the Germans 'empire' was a creature of romance and spirituality, whereas British imperialism was a more prosaic beast founded on trade and exploitation. No comment was made by the pamphlet's author on these assertions. It was left to the reader to make up his or her own mind. The chapter went on to give evidence of German plans for further imperial growth should they win the war, and this theme was elaborated upon in the chapter on Germany's planned 'oriental dominion' which Morrison claimed had been one of her chief aims since long before the war. For Germany, the *Drang nach Osten* was, again, the stuff of legend and romance, of 'towers and minarets and palm groves', serving to give fortitude to German soldiers.<sup>31</sup>

Morrison made frequent reference to Germany's ambition for 'world supremacy', for the domination of the Nietzschean 'blonde-haired Northern race', with the intention of ensuring that the Allies did not falter in their determination to continue with the war until they achieved success. A tinge of derision frequently crept into the author's comments reflecting a certainty in the strengths of the British imperial model:

Herr Hauser [author of *Race and Race Questions in Germany*] casts his gaze into the future and finds the Germanic blonde race marching from conquest to conquest, until the whole world, with all its varieties of hair, is at its feet .... The German variant of the Blonde Man, rendered proud and assured by conquest, will rule the universe.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Morrison, *Sidelights on Germany*, p.55-6.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p.61.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p.5.

The perceived absurdity of German race theory was further emphasised in the sections on German attitudes towards Turks and Kurds. Morrison pointed out German hypocrisy in their newfound ‘brotherhood’ with the Turks, a nation Morrison himself dismissed as ‘retrograde and impossible’, and ridiculed their efforts to identify racial similarities between Teutons, Turks and Kurds, a notion he nevertheless considered few in Britain would be disposed to quarrel with.<sup>33</sup>

The emphasis on German imperialism apparent in Morrison’s book reflects a wider trend in 1917-18. Whereas in 1914-16 only three pamphlets were produced on this topic, at least a further fifteen were published in 1917-18.<sup>34</sup> Most of these concerned Africa and excoriated Germany’s colonial record there. In pamphlets such as *Towards Extermination: Germany’s Treatment of the African Native*, *Germany’s Colonial Failure* and *The Black Slaves of Prussia* (all published in 1918) Wellington House took the themes they had developed in the first half of the war and applied them to German behaviour in her colonies.<sup>35</sup> Germany’s treatment of her colonial subjects provided fruitful ground not only in support of assertions of German cruelty and barbarism, but also as evidence of their unfitness to colonise. ‘The German’, wrote the author of *The Black Slaves of Prussia*, ‘does not understand the elementary principles of humane Government. He is efficient, he is polite, he is correct in his behaviour and in his official attitude, but he is a German. And being a German he sees a native as a tool; he is cruel and inhuman, and under him the African must become a slave or die’.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p.67. Hitler, too, sought to cultivate relations with the Islamic world (see David Motadel, *Islam and Nazi Germany’s War* (London, 2014)).

<sup>34</sup> See Table on p. 93.

<sup>35</sup> Frank Maclean, *Towards Extermination: Germany’s Treatment of the African Native* (St Albans, 1918), Frank Maclean, *Germany’s Colonial Failure: Her Rule in Africa Condemned on German Evidence* (London, 1918) and Frank Weston, *The Black Slaves of Prussia: An Open Letter Addressed to General Smuts* (Boston, 1918).

<sup>36</sup> Weston, p.17.



A different attitude was taken towards German exploitation of Turkey, in relation to which British commentators appear to have experienced both jealousy and awe. 'Her diplomacy', wrote novelist, E.F. Benson, 'was not less than brilliant simply from the fact that on the one hand it soothed Turkey instead of irritating, and, on the other, that it went absolutely unnoticed for a long time. Nobody knew that it was going on'.<sup>37</sup> Indignantly, he went on to describe some of the ways in which the Germans, with 'tentacles and suckers on every branch of Turkish industry',<sup>38</sup> had exploited and controlled aspects of Turkish life:

A saltpetre factory is established at Konia by Herr Toepfer, whose enterprise is rewarded with an Iron Cross and a Turkish decoration. The afforestation near Constantinople, ordered by the Ministry of Agriculture, is put into German hands, and in the vilayet of Aidin (April 1916) ninety concessions were granted to German capitalists to undertake the exploitation of metallic ores.<sup>39</sup>

German exploitation of Turkey had to end, argued Benson, not for humanitarian reasons but because Turkey, if left in German hands, would continue to be exploited by Germany and pose a risk to British territory in the surrounding areas. In addition, the resources of the Ottoman Empire were plentiful and varied, including, for example, minerals, cotton and beet-sugar, and German use of them had to be stopped as they enabled Germany to prolong her war effort and precluded their use by the Allies.<sup>40</sup>

One of the most common means of making a comparison between British and German standards was to compare their respective treatment of prisoners of war. As can be seen from the Table around forty-seven pamphlets dealt with this subject over the course of the war. As early as mid-1915 tales were recounted of German cruelty towards British POWs and contrasted with Britain's approach

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<sup>37</sup> E.F. Benson, *Crescent & Iron Cross* (London, 1918), p.153-4.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p.192.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p.190-191.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p.265.

which had ‘in every case shown [itself] ready and willing to treat German prisoners of war in accordance with the provisions of International Conventions and the recognised principles of humanity’.<sup>41</sup> The depiction of German treatment of prisoners frequently conformed with representations of German soldiers as cruel and barbaric. In *My German Prisons*, the author, Captain Gilliland, stated that his aim was to reveal the ‘infamous, relentless and savage character of the Hun’.<sup>42</sup> Describing German treatment of an injured Irish soldier in *Wounded and a Prisoner of War*, Malcolm Hay observed how a group of German soldiers pulled the Irishman out of a group of sleeping prisoners to point

with their fingers at the poor mutilated face with coarse jeering laughter. The young Irish soldier sat patiently through it all – his blind eye was a running sore, the torn cheek in healing had left a hideously scarred hollow, and the mouth and nose were twisted to one side. His condition would have stirred pity in the heart of a savage, and yet these Germans laughed and jeered.<sup>43</sup>

The Germans were, according to Hay, a ‘treacherous race, coarse in pleasure, bestial in drunkenness, viciously brutal in war’ but he also emphasised their bravery, discipline and patriotism, thereby appealing to allies and neutrals for their continued commitment to the war effort.<sup>44</sup>

The British illustrated their more civilised and humane approach towards POWs in publications such as *Turkish Prisoners in Egypt*, a pamphlet which set out the (edited) conclusions of a Red Cross enquiry into the conditions of Turkish prisoners of war.<sup>45</sup> The extracts indicate a thorough review of all aspects of camp life including food, medical care, accommodation, clothing and morale at a

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<sup>41</sup> Anon., *The Treatment of Prisoners of War in England and Germany during the First Eight Months of the War* (London, 1915), p.31.

<sup>42</sup> Captain H.G. Gilliland, *My German Prisons: Being the Experiences of an Officer During Two and a Half Years as a Prisoner of War* (London, 1918), p.10.

<sup>43</sup> Malcolm Hay, *Wounded and A Prisoner of War* (Edinburgh, 1916), p.227.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p.295.

<sup>45</sup> Anon., *Turkish Prisoners in Egypt: A Report by the Delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross* (London, 1917). See also, *British Prison-Camps in India and Burma* (London, 1917).

number of camps and the cited conclusions stated that ‘the inspectors, commandants and officers of the camps treat the prisoners with humanity and do all in their power to soften their lot’.<sup>46</sup> Special attention was given to the prisoners’ religious sensibilities and the respect accorded to them by the camp authorities. Most of the prisoners were Muslims and the report found that ‘Imaums [sic.] take religious charge, and the prisoners have full liberty to carry out their daily worship’.<sup>47</sup> This pamphlet served the dual purpose of illustrating the superior nature of British treatment of POWs and of non-Europeans, in other words, it enunciated their greater capacity for imperial rule as well as their greater humanity. A similar approach was taken in *British Civilian Prisoners in East Africa* which described German treatment of ‘the British, the Indians [and] the natives’ as a story of ‘undisguised brutality .... It was the treatment of bullies’.<sup>48</sup>

## ***2.2 Growing Confidence in British Prestige***

In Chapter One British insecurity regarding the quality of Anglo-Saxon ‘stock’ and the consequent reaction to Prussianism was considered. Such tremulousness was similar to British fears of a pan-Islamic threat to the Empire. By late 1916 it had become apparent that despite the pitting of imperial subjects against fellow Muslims in the Ottoman armies, and notwithstanding the feared loss of prestige resulting from military defeats in the Dardanelles and Mesopotamia, there was little evidence that the Empire’s Muslim subjects were fomenting revolt.<sup>49</sup> Against this backdrop, Wellington House’s output reveals a growing willingness to articulate both German efforts to stoke a jihad and the failure of such efforts. In *German Plots and British Triumphs in the Bible Lands*, Canon Parfit, a

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p.64.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p.63.

<sup>48</sup> Anon., *British Civilian Prisoners in East Africa* (London, 1918), p.30.

<sup>49</sup> There were a few minor incidents, notably amongst Indian troops in Singapore in February 1915 which was attributed to a lack of visible British prestige.

clergyman based in Jerusalem and popular Wellington House contributor despite being described as ‘rather a tub-thumper’ by the Foreign Office,<sup>50</sup> described German machinations:

The audacity of Germany’s ambitions ... led her to aim at something more than a Pan-German Empire from the North Sea to the Persian Gulf; she conceived a plot to hasten the overthrow of Great Britain and her Allies by the re-establishment, under the Kaiser’s protectorate, of a great Pan-Islamic Power, with Cairo as its capital. The Sultan of Turkey, as the religious head of the followers of the Mahomet, was designed to be Germany’s tool for this diabolical task.<sup>51</sup>

For Parfit, the success of this scheme would have been more catastrophic to Christendom than Prussian victory in Europe. Its success would also have been parlous for the Empire:

The British Empire was [sic.] never before been confronted by a greater peril than that which arose when the Sultan of Turkey proclaimed at the instigation of Germany, a religious war to the two hundred millions of his followers. It is not in the least realized by the average Britisher what a miraculous deliverance we have had.<sup>52</sup>

Instead of rebelling the Empire’s imperial subjects had remained faithful. Parfit claimed the ‘world was astounded at the wonderful response of loyalty that came from India’ which he ascribed to the essentially Christian nature of Britain’s Empire.<sup>53</sup>

In *The Welfare of Egypt*, J.S. Willmore also expounded in depth upon German efforts to stoke a global jihad, for example, by: inciting strikes amongst Muslim stokers and engineers on the Khedivial steamers; commissioning the making of Indian costumes so that spies could infiltrate the Indian Army and provoke

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<sup>50</sup> See TNA FO 395/139/67053.

<sup>51</sup> Canon J.T. Parfit, *German Plots and British Triumphs in the Bible Lands* (London, undated but likely 1916 or 1917), p. 5.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p.5-6.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p.7.

trouble; spreading false rumours about Muslim uprisings in India and Afghanistan and of the conversion of the Kaiser to Islam.<sup>54</sup> Speaking as a long-time resident of Egypt, Willmore claimed German efforts to stir dissent had failed because the vast majority of the Muslims in Egypt were content with British rule or, at least, viewed it as preferable to German or Turkish rule.

Parfit and Willmore's emphasis on the virtues of British imperialism reflects a common theme in a number of pamphlets from 1917 and 1918. Whilst earlier pamphlets tended to focus on Western civilisation and contrast it with German *Kultur*, the later pamphlets reveal a greater propensity to focus on the merits of British imperialism (and, in other contexts, as indicated in the previous section, Germany's poor track record in relation to the same). As Winter points out, war aims became central to propaganda in the second half of the war, 'What kind of peace, indeed what kind of post-war world, were questions at the heart of the appeal', and articulating the merits of British imperialism was a means of legitimising its existence and paving the way for its expansion.<sup>55</sup> Historian Charles Maier argues 'if there is to be a "hegemon" who relies on more than force alone, the nation playing the role must be perceived as providing a public good'.<sup>56</sup> Going forward, the British wanted to preserve and extend their influence but they needed to offer something viable in return. Historically, as discussed in the Introduction, Britain had justified her imperial expansion on a number of grounds, not least the ostensibly noble and self-sacrificing mission to civilise the colonised. But, in the context of war between the great powers, the advantages of Western civilisation were harder to discern. As John Darwin explains, 'the most vital prop of Europe's primacy in Eurasia, and of the powerful position of the great European states in the Outer World beyond, had

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<sup>54</sup> J.S. Willmore, *The Welfare of Egypt* (London, 1917), p.3-4.

<sup>55</sup> Jay Winter, 'Propaganda and the Mobilization of Consent' in Hew Strachan ed., *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War* (Oxford, 1998), pp.216-226, p.217.

<sup>56</sup> Charles S. Maier, *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and Its Predecessors* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2006), p.208.

been their collective determination not to fight one another'.<sup>57</sup> The absence of that prop made necessary a re-formulation of the imperial vision. It was all very well to refer in general terms, as Gilbert Parker did in 1915 in *The World in the Crucible*, to the greatness of British civilisation and the attributes of Britain's form of imperialism, but as the war progressed it became increasingly necessary to elucidate substantively what the benefits were. As Europe imploded, as 'in a grotesque reversal of Joseph Conrad's novelistic vision, hundreds of thousands of non-white men were voyaging to the heart of whiteness, as it were, to witness "The horror! The horror!" of Western warfare', what gave the British the right to continue to claim as superior their own race and civilisation and hence justify their entitlement to rule?<sup>58</sup> By going beyond generalisations and assumptions and providing particulars of the merits of British rule, the propagandists found a means not only of differentiating Britain from the Germans and the Turks, but also of consolidating British entitlement to the territory currently under her control as well as that which she aspired to acquire.

Legitimising her colonial activities was crucial not only at home and in the colonies but also, especially, in America. Wilson's wartime rhetoric had become overwhelmingly popular at both a political and popular level. Not only were his ideas fashionable, but, as Manela writes, they were coming from 'a man widely viewed at the time as the most powerful leader in the world arena, whose influence on the shape of the post-war international order, it was assumed, would be decisive'.<sup>59</sup> Gaining American endorsement was therefore perceived as critical to the post-war success of Britain's global ambitions. By elucidating the advantages of British rule in the territory under her control, the propagandists sought to assure readers that there was no incompatibility between Wilsonian ideals and British imperialism. Indeed, by extending her influence into Ottoman

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<sup>57</sup> Darwin, *After Tamerlane*, p.370.

<sup>58</sup> Santanu Das (ed.), *Race, Empire and First World War Writing* (Cambridge, 2011), p.4.

<sup>59</sup> Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford, 2007), p.10.

territory, Britain would be facilitating the ability of those subject races to help themselves.

As the war became attritional, and national cohesion the only means of winning it, there are historians who argue that the emphasis on influencing American opinion diminished as propaganda on the home front became increasingly important. John Horne, for example, writes that ‘in the second half of the war the focus of state propaganda was no longer neutral countries, which had less importance once Italy and the United States entered the fray, but rather domestic opinion (civilian and military) and also the enemy’.<sup>60</sup> However, a reading of documentation emanating from Wellington House indicates that whilst there may have been less need to justify their cause, a dialogue with the United States remained essential as a means of paving the way towards acceptable peace terms. As Robert Donald argued in March 1918, it was vital for Britain to ‘advertise’ the Empire to her allies and show ‘what it stands for, what our system of self-government means; to explain the vastness of our resources, our commanding control over a great many raw materials, our success in governing alien races and the way we have built up a free commonwealth of nations by freedom instead of by force’.<sup>61</sup> Pamphlets such as Parfit’s and Willmore’s were designed less for domestic opinion, for the enemy or the colonised, than to ensure that international opinion viewed British imperialism as a benign force for good that could be used after the war as a role model towards the achievement of a free and equal world of nations as opposed to a structure at odds with Wilsonian ideals warranting dismantlement, as did the German colonial enterprise.

Accordingly, Parfit and Willmore, amongst many others, strove earnestly to show why Britain remained fit to rule. In Parfit’s words, ‘we have acquired throughout the East a reputation for fairness, we have vastly improved the countries we have

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<sup>60</sup> Horne, ‘Public Opinion’, p.290.

<sup>61</sup> ‘Propaganda and the War, Notes from Reports and Recommendations by Robert Donald’, June 1918, TNA INF 4/5, p.24.

occupied, and we have always benefited to a remarkable degree the nations that have come under our sway'.<sup>62</sup> A vivid example of the improvements Britons had wrought was given in *Turkey: A Past and A Future*, in which the anonymous author quoted Sir William Willcocks, who undertook surveys in Africa for the Ottoman Ministry, and wrote in 1911:

The last voyage I made before coming to this country was up the Nile from Khartûm to the great equatorial lakes. In this most desperate and forbidden region I was filled with pride to think that I belonged to a race whose sons, even in this inhospitable waste of waters, were struggling in the face of a thousand discouragements to introduce new forest trees and new agricultural products and ameliorate in some degree the conditions of life of the naked and miserable inhabitants.<sup>63</sup>

The strength, courage and virtue of British imperialists was amply demonstrated and then contrasted with the situation in Southern Mesopotamia, once one of the most abundant places on earth, and now a wasteland under Turkish rule. Thus, the writer concluded, 'Turkey is an obstruction of the future'.<sup>64</sup>

Willmore extolled British rule in Egypt and provided detailed information on the improvements wrought under their administration despite innumerable obstacles. A number of aspects of Egyptian life were considered including government, finance, trade, agriculture, the legal system, education, the army, public health and prisons. For example, in relation to public health, he quoted Sir Guy Hunter, reporting on Egyptian hospitals in 1883: "The hospitals," he said, "are in a more or less tumble-down, dirty condition, impregnated with foul odours and containing beds filthy in the extreme. They are, in fact, noisome places utterly unfit for the reception of human beings".<sup>65</sup> Willmore then referred to the

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<sup>62</sup> Parfit, *German Plots*, p.8.

<sup>63</sup> Anon., *Turkey: A Past and A Future* (reprinted from *The Round Table*) (London, 1917), p.78. Most likely written by Toynbee. See TNA FO 395/139/83214 and Isaiah Friedman, 'Arnold Toynbee: Pro-Arab or Pro-Zionist?' in *Israel Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1, Spring 1999, pp.73-95, p.93.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p.79.

<sup>65</sup> Willmore, p.28.



improvements which had been made including the free treatment of the poor and especial efforts to cure ophthalmia due in part to the generous patronage of British individuals.<sup>66</sup> He conceded that Britain pursued her own interests but, he argued, she had aligned them with those of Egypt. One of the concluding comments referred to the improvements made for the country's Muslims. Britain 'has increased the facilities for the pilgrimage to Mecca of the Mussulman population and added to the comforts of the devout who undertake it'.<sup>67</sup>

Willmore also directly addressed the points raised in the German pamphlets of 1915 referred to in Chapter One. He sought to rebut specifically some of the allegations about Denshawāi but he acknowledged that 'the sentence was unduly severe. Lord Cromer, who was absent from Egypt at the time, was of that opinion, but fair play demands that the full facts should be stated, and not only those which are calculated to bring odium on the English administration'.<sup>68</sup> The Denshawāi incident was an aberration in Britain's otherwise unimpeachable record, whereas German imperialism embraced such brutality as a matter of course: 'We know ... that Germany shrinks from no methods by which she may gain her objects'.<sup>69</sup>

British confidence in her imperial position was bolstered by military victories in the East in 1917, most significantly the fall of Baghdad in March and Jerusalem in December. As Basil Liddell Hart later observed, 'for the prestige of Britain and the morale of all the Allies the capture [of Baghdad] was an invaluable stimulant'.<sup>70</sup> It was

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p.29.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p.34.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p.8.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p.8.

<sup>70</sup>Basil Liddell Hart, *History of the First World War* (London, 1970), p.355.

an event which impressed the imagination of the whole world, both because of the romantic appeal of the famed city of the Arabian Nights, and because it symbolized the first streaks of dawn coming to illumine the darkness which had lain like a pall over the Allied cause throughout 1916.<sup>71</sup>

Liddell Hart did not use the medieval Crusades as a reference point against which the victories could be compared, and yet this was a subject with obvious resonance. In his work on the war and culture, Robb argues that the upper classes were heavily influenced by chivalric traditions. Here was a chance to show the country that they were not the 'redundant reactionaries of radical propaganda, but the patriotic class of knightly crusaders and chivalric heroes'.<sup>72</sup> According to Robb, aristocratic soldiers showed 'a tendency to adopt medieval language and conceits in their diaries, letters, and descriptions of the war'.<sup>73</sup> Bar-Yosef also argues that the upper classes associated the campaigns in Mesopotamia and Palestine with the Crusades but points out that for most Britons the obvious association was a biblical one, where Christianity was seen to be once more asserting its rightful place in the Holy Land.<sup>74</sup> Both biblical and medieval references were considered potentially harmful to Muslim sensibilities by the Foreign Office and consequently by Wellington House. A fourth Press Notice relating to Muslim opinion was released on 15 November 1917. It contained the following instructions:

The attention of the Press is drawn to the undesirability of publishing any article, paragraph or picture suggesting that military operations against Turkey are in any sense a Holy War, a modern Crusade, or have anything whatsoever to do with religious questions. The British Empire is said to contain a hundred million Mohammedan subjects of the King and it is obviously mischievous to suggest that our quarrel with Turkey is one between Christianity and Islam.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p.351.

<sup>72</sup> David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (New Haven, Conn., 1990), p.74.

<sup>73</sup> Robb, p.71. T.E.Lawrence, of course, specialised in Crusader castles while at university.

<sup>74</sup> See Bar-Yosef, 'The Last Crusade?'.

<sup>75</sup> 'Appendix (b) Official Press Bureau Instructions', Notice D.607 15 November 1917, TNA INF 4/4B.

Meanwhile, the War Cabinet advised Allenby in his carefully choreographed, and filmed, entry into Jerusalem, that ‘in view of the unique character of the city and of the many difficult political and diplomatic questions that were raised in connection with it .... no flags should be hoisted in the event of the occupation of the city by Allied troops’.<sup>76</sup> The protection of Muslim sensibilities was to be achieved not only by maintaining religious neutrality but also by depicting Allenby’s entry into Jerusalem as one motivated by peace rather than conquest.

The strictures on religious neutrality are evident in a souvenir pamphlet produced after Jerusalem’s fall consisting of photographs and factual descriptions of sites of importance to Christians, Jews and Muslims.<sup>77</sup> It was neutral in its description of matters specific to different religions and equally generous in depicting the beauty and grandness of the various religious sites. In another pamphlet, the author emphasised how Allenby entered Jerusalem humbly on foot (again, by order, and as a contrast to the Kaiser’s ‘uncouth and tactless condescension’<sup>78</sup> when he entered the city on horseback), and read a proclamation in ‘many languages promising equal and traditional rights to all Churches and Religions, and the protection of all sacred spots’.<sup>79</sup> To the extent that religious symbolism was drawn from Allenby’s entry it was to emphasise the similarities between his entry, ‘with neither military display nor the symbols of victory, unheralded by bugle or gun’, and that of Christ, the ‘divine Peasant’ who also sought peace and tolerance (and who is, of course, viewed as a prophet in the Islamic faith as well as in Christianity).<sup>80</sup> The only reference to the Crusades in Mathews’ pamphlet was as a means of contrasting Allenby’s peaceful entrance with that of the

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<sup>76</sup> WC Minutes 282(4), 26 November 1917, TNA CAB 23/4.

<sup>77</sup> A.M. Luncz (ed.), *Souvenir of the Occupation of Jerusalem: Views & Accurate Description of Jerusalem etc. By the British Troops Dec. 9th 1917* (Jerusalem, undated but presumably 1918).

<sup>78</sup> Basil Mathews, *The Freedom of Jerusalem* (London, 1918), p.19.

<sup>79</sup> E.W.G. Masterman, *The Deliverance of Jerusalem* (London, 1918), p.37.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p.19.

Crusaders when the street of Jerusalem ‘ran with blood’.<sup>81</sup> In other words, his entry was to be viewed neither as a conquest nor as a victory for Christianity or the West but as a victory for peace and religious tolerance with Britain assuming the role of arbiter.

Whilst seeking to downplay the religious significance, the government nevertheless sought to use the opportunity provided by Allenby’s success to enhance their prestige. Lord Curzon told the War Cabinet that the news of Jerusalem’s capture should ‘be made known in a way calculated favourably to impress India and the Mohammedan world’.<sup>82</sup> Meanwhile, Wellington House emphasised the historical resonances of the Allied occupation of Jerusalem. In *The Deliverance of Jerusalem*, the author observed grandiosely that

[T]he same historical highway which brought to the Gates of Gaza Thothmes, Rameses, Sennacherib, Cambyzes, Alexander, Pompey, Titus, Saladin, Napoleon and many generals, has now yielded to the advance of the mixed Army under General Allenby of British, Irish, Australians, New Zealanders, Canadians, Indians, and, in small contingents, French and Italians.<sup>83</sup>

As well as downplaying the role of the other Entente Powers, the author emphasised British prestige by listing those great military leaders of times past with whom Allenby now shared a pedigree.

The prestige regained by military success and the Central Powers’ failure to stoke a global jihad arguably meant that the need for illustrated publications such as *al-Haqīqah* diminished in 1917. Certainly, the changing political and military climate was reflected in the content of the magazine such that the earlier focus on ammunition piles, factories and parades (illustrating the greatness, power and reach of the British Empire) lessened and military action in the Middle East and

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<sup>81</sup> Mathews, p.16.

<sup>82</sup> WC Minutes 279(19), 21 November 1917, TNA CAB 23/4.

<sup>83</sup> Masterman, p.11.

Western Europe was awarded greater coverage.<sup>84</sup> The victories of 1917 and 1918 were sufficient proof of restored British prestige and there was no longer such a pressing need to assert the might of the Empire in ways other than militarily. However, far from discontinuing *al-Haqīqah*, Wellington House continued to produce it and implemented several additional publications including an illustrated paper targeting Muslims in the Malay States called *Warta Yang Tulus* and two new papers in India. A version in Bengali, Gujarati and Tamil (for the West, North-East and South) named *Satya Vani* was introduced in late 1916. *Al-Haqīqah* continued to be used to reach Indian Muslims via the Urdu (Hindustani) translation until mid-1917. Edward Long proposed that a better approach would be to create an Indian version of *al-Haqīqah*, *Jangi Akbar*, printed in Urdu, Hindi and Gurumukhi (for the North and North-West of India). *Al-Haqīqah* would continue to be published in Arabic, Persian and Turkish but would drop the Urdu and be aimed primarily at the Middle East.<sup>85</sup>

The need to reorganise the production of *al-Haqīqah* was driven by the India Office's reluctance to continue assisting with the financing of the papers. Until mid-1917 most copies were distributed free of charge via a variety of channels although some were sold commercially. The consensus had become that giving them away was not only expensive but devalued the publications because the 'Oriental mind' disregarded anything it did not have to pay for and because it created suspicion as to their purpose. In the words of Gilbert Clayton, Cairo's influential Director of Intelligence:

The Egyptian does not understand that it is possible to give away something for nothing. On the other hand, if the paper is bought and sold like any other, even though it be at a very low price, the more ignorant will not realise that the British Authorities have any close connection with it.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> See Appendix 1, Images 4, 5 and 6.

<sup>85</sup> Long to Shuckburgh, 12 April 1917, BL IO L/PS/10/581/217.

<sup>86</sup> Clayton to MI7, 17 August 1916, BL IO L/PS/10/581/345.

In India, the government's commercial distributor, Messrs. Wheeler and Co., asked 'What on earth is the good of this free distribution to anybody? The public simply treat the whole thing with contempt'.<sup>87</sup> Long believed 'it was essential that propaganda should be continued in India, and [thought it was] far more effective in pictorial, than in any other form'.<sup>88</sup> Wheelers convinced him that if they were sold rather than given away they would be held in much greater esteem and hence would be more successful as propaganda. Accordingly, Long proposed that Wellington House assume the costs of funding the papers and sell them predominantly through commercial channels in exchange for a significant share of the proceeds. This would reduce expenditure and, hopefully, increase their perceived value in India. The India Office had no objections to the provision of propaganda, only with paying for it, and therefore sought to 'clinch this arrangement' as soon as they could.<sup>89</sup> In fact, the revised scheme proved both successful and profitable.<sup>90</sup>

Wellington House continued to take a flexible and innovative approach towards the distribution of the papers, always seeking to allay suspicions regarding their origins. In October 1917, for example, Wheelers drew Long's attention to an inordinately large request for 100,000 copies of *al-Haqīqah* in Afghanistan and cautioned that it may have been the work of enemy agents seeking to remove the paper from circulation.<sup>91</sup> It then transpired that the increased demand was because waste paper was more expensive in Afghanistan than *al-Haqīqah* and so the paper was being bought as the former (waste paper cost 25-30 rupees a maund, whereas *al-Haqīqah* cost about 16).<sup>92</sup> The initial response was one of

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<sup>87</sup> Comments of Lisle Wheeler contained in a letter from Long to Shuckburgh, 1 June 1917, BL IO L/PS/10/581/190.

<sup>88</sup> Long to Shuckburgh, 12 April 1917, BL IO L/PS/10/581/217.

<sup>89</sup> Minute by Shuckburgh, 12 May 1917, BL IO L/PS/10/581/197.

<sup>90</sup> Report by E.E.Long on propaganda in India, 22 October 1920, BL IO L/PS/10/12.

<sup>91</sup> Rudge to Long, 29 October 1917, BL IO L/PS/10/581/154.

<sup>92</sup> Viceroy to IO, 17 December 1917, BL IO L/PS/10/581/117.

outrage until it became evident that the paper was not being pulped but was being used to package goods, in other words, it could still be read. This, of course, was a very effective means of distribution, bearing no official stamp and incurring no official cost, whilst insinuating the paper from Afghanistan into Central Asia, remoter Afghanistan and northern Persia. As Lisle Wheeler put it, 'I can certainly imagine [the 'native'] spend[ing] a considerable portion of his time when packing and unpacking the goods wrapped in copies of *Al Haqiqat* by reading contents'.<sup>93</sup> 'Gad – it is a splendid scheme,' he wrote jubilantly in another letter, 'and I'm jolly glad Wellington House has tumbled to it .... [S]hort of dropping these papers into Afghanistan and Persia by means of aeroplanes, nothing better ... could be adopted'.<sup>94</sup> Unsurprisingly, the extra 100,000 copies were sent after all!<sup>95</sup>

In their reports of 1917 Robert Donald and his fellow newspaper men completely discarded the value of the 'Oriental papers'. Arthur Spurgeon, Donald's assistant, who produced a report for him in December 1917 on the operation of Wellington House, made no mention of its work on the Muslim world apart from a reference to the 'very heavy cost' of the illustrated papers which he suggested should be 'dispensed with' (presumably for that reason).<sup>96</sup> With a monthly circulation of approximately 50,000 copies each,<sup>97</sup> these papers certainly represented a significant outlay, however, Charles Masterman took great umbrage to Spurgeon's dismissal of Wellington House's work on these papers and his response warrants quoting at length:

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<sup>93</sup> Wheeler to Rudge, 8 January 1918, BL IO L/PS/10/581/95.

<sup>94</sup> Wheeler to Rudge, 23 March 1918, BL IO L/PS/10/581/64.

<sup>95</sup> Appendix 2 contains photographs relating to the distribution of *Satya Vani* and *Jangi Akbar* in India and Afghanistan.

<sup>96</sup> Department of Information: Report on the Operations of Wellington House by Arthur Spurgeon, 7 December 1917, TNA INF 4/4B.

<sup>97</sup> Report of Proceedings of meeting held at Wellington House, 26 November 1917, TNA INF 4/11, p.21.

He [Spurgeon] made no kind of inquiry in regard to these papers. He never interviewed the editor of Oriental publications [Long]. He expressed no desire for evidence as to why they were started, who was supporting them, how and where they circulated, what was, if any, the demand from the East for them, whether they were welcomed by those who were supporting British prestige, or what German propaganda they were supposed to counteract and how far they had been successful in the work. Criticism under such conditions is worthless. These papers have been requested by, or issued with the approval of, the Foreign Office, the Colonial Office, the War Office, and the India Office. No inquiry was made of any of these. I could have furnished him, if he had asked for it, with evidence of the great demand for such work in order to maintain British prestige in the East both now and after the war. I could have provided samples of the German propaganda papers which, in the opinion of critics, were turning the minds of native populations away from the British Empire and towards Germany. I could have furnished expressions of approval and requests for development from Colonial Governments, Ambassadors, Consuls, local propaganda committees, and an enormous volume of testimony and appreciation as to the influence of these papers upon the Eastern mind. I could have shown him one paper selling widely in India, another started and maintained at the express desire of the Government of the Malay States, a third scattered by aeroplanes over the Turkish lines, others penetrating into Morocco, Central Africa, Afghanistan, Western Turkestan, with testimonials as to their value and their influence in these remote regions. These facts should have been examined before any such verdict was pronounced.<sup>98</sup>

Masterman's comments illuminate the rationale behind the papers as well as his opinion on their effectiveness. They were produced to enhance British prestige and counter German propaganda, not only within the Empire but throughout the Muslim world. That they achieved this target was evident, according to Masterman, from the ongoing demand for more and the fact that widespread dissent in the East had not been forthcoming. The fact that Donald and Spurgeon attributed no value to them may have been due to their ignorance of certain political objectives or their preoccupation with other vehicles for propaganda. It was certainly not because prestige had ceased to be a vital concern to Whitehall as, despite Donald's dismissal, *al-Haḳīqah* continued to be viewed as an

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<sup>98</sup> Masterman's Comments on Spurgeon's Report of 7 December 1917, 29 December 1917. Donald in his reply did not comment on this part of Masterman's critique other than to dismiss it as a 'waste of paper', TNA INF 4/5.



important part of Wellington House's output; so much so that whereas a number of the other illustrated papers, such as *America Latina*, *O Espelho* and *Hesperia*, were cut in June 1918, and *War Pictorial* was much reduced, *al-Haqīqah* continued to be produced even after the war had ended.<sup>99</sup>

Of all Wellington House's publications these magazines arguably best represent the way in which the work of the propagandists did extend beyond the dry and scholarly pamphlet towards material for the masses. If the aim of the Ministry from March 1918 was to reach 'the hearts of the duskiest aborigines and the smallest school-children' then *al-Haqīqah*, in its effort to reach the illiterate Muslim populations of the furthest reaches of the globe, was ahead of the curve.<sup>100</sup> Its photographs and simple captions were already telling the messages that Northcliffe and Donald subsequently sought to convey with all the power of the press. The Empire was winning the war, it was a force for good, and it championed the interests of the oppressed and benighted.

### ***2.3 The Turks in Wellington House Pamphlets and Books***

In Chapter One it was argued that Wellington House reserved its vitriol for the Germans and took a relatively benign stance towards the Turks. As Cook put it in 1914, 'The Turkish Empire had been bound to Great Britain, as His Majesty King George recently reminded the Sultan, "by a friendship of more than a century"'.<sup>101</sup> The maintenance of amicable relations was viewed by many, including Sir Edward Grey, Foreign Secretary from 1905 to 1916, as an essential aspect of British foreign policy, although others disagreed. Lord Cromer argued that Britain could not be expected to support the Ottomans simply because they were Muslims even though this might alienate Muslims in India. Indians had to

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<sup>99</sup> See Memorandum by GH Mair on 'Expenditure on the News Department from January 1st-March 31st 1919', 11 December 1918, TNA FO 395/235.

<sup>100</sup> 'Cinema Films' in British Propaganda During the War, IWM 49/3 (41).0, p.1.

<sup>101</sup> Cook, p.3-4.

understand that Turkey had brought about her own downfall by consistently rejecting the well-intentioned advice of Britain.<sup>102</sup> As Cromer's comments reveal, the proffered friendship was one caveated by a strong streak of paternalism. The Ottoman Empire was perceived as weak and easily led, requiring strong Western leadership.

Europeans found 'Oriental' government inferior to their own and there were, of course, many who also believed Oriental races similarly inadequate. However, Eastern civilisation was perceived in some quarters as more wholesome than Western. One was 'bound to like' the average Anatolian peasant for his 'courage and his simplicity, and his blind fidelity and his loyalty'.<sup>103</sup> It was possible even to feel an affinity with the Turks; after all 'the vices of the worst Moslem ruffian [were] at least those of a conquering race'.<sup>104</sup> For Turcophiles, the corrupting influence was perceived as being European greed and viciousness. Contemporary use of the term 'Levantine' illustrates the point. Originally it had been used to describe Europeans living in the Levant but it came to mean a derogatory term for anyone born in the Levant and not a Muslim. Levantines were perceived as immoral traders who exploited any situation to make a profit. Accordingly, the hypothetical Levantine, after the fall of Khartoum in 1885, 'calmly awaited the coming of the Mahdi at Khartoum, sure, sooner or later, to spoil the spoiler'.<sup>105</sup> Whereas Muslims and Islam were frequently viewed with respect, the term Levantine 'became a symbol of a moral and intellectual condition, carrying with it an almost theological odium'.<sup>106</sup> Such degenerate Western influences were blamed for the shortcomings of the Young Turk administration. As T.E. Lawrence put it,

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<sup>102</sup> Evelyn Baring, Earl of Cromer, *Political & Literary Essays, 1908-1913* (London, 1913), p.413.

<sup>103</sup> D.G. Hogarth, *A Wandering Scholar in the Levant* (London, 1896) p.69.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p.70.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p.192.

<sup>106</sup> Elie Kedourie, *England and the Middle East: The Destruction of the Ottoman Empire, 1914-21* (London, 1978), p.75.

The shallow and half-polished Committee of the Young Turks were descendants of Greeks, Albanians, Circassians, Bulgars, Armenians, Jews – anything but Seljuks or Ottomans. The commons ceased to feel in tune with their governors, whose culture was Levantine, and whose political theory was French.<sup>107</sup>

Writing in 1904, Rudyard Kipling opined that, provided they were ‘uncontaminated’, the Turks were ‘at least as good as many Christian gentlemen that one knows’.<sup>108</sup> The idea of the negative effects of cultural or racial ‘contamination’ may have reflected the domestic concerns of Britain’s elite as the status quo was challenged by a rising, enfranchised, middle class, women’s suffrage and the encroachment of foreign elements on their territory. Dilution of stock was a threat not only to the aristocracy seeking to retain its position in the face of the uncertainties of a changing society and to Anglo-Saxon martial material, it also challenged Britain’s imperial entitlement. Any kind of miscegenation or contamination had the potential to undermine the separateness, and hence the innate superiority, that underscored British entitlement to control other races.<sup>109</sup>

Whilst it was acceptable to admire Turkish purity, piety and chivalry between 1914 and 1916, and indeed this accorded with efforts not to offend the Empire’s Muslim population, from the onset of the Lloyd George administration tolerant attitudes towards the Ottomans, or more specifically the Turks, could no longer be left unchecked. The Foreign Office had come to the view that Britain’s commercial and political interests were no longer best protected by the preservation of the Ottoman Empire and now sought the ejection of Turkey from Europe altogether and the securing of European control over Constantinople, the Bosphorous and Dardanelles.<sup>110</sup> Not only were the Turks to be ejected from

<sup>107</sup> T.E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph* (London, 1935), p.55.

<sup>108</sup> Quoted in Adelson, p.102.

<sup>109</sup> An idea that will be explored further in Chapter Five.

<sup>110</sup> Sterling Kernek, ‘The British Government’s Reactions to President Wilson’s “Peace” Note of December 1916’ in *The Historical Journal*, Vol.13, No.4 (Dec. 1970), pp. 721-766, p.753.

Europe but their empire was to be dismantled as Lloyd George saw a British presence in the Middle East as vital to the future of the Empire. Simultaneously, the government was being advised that opinion in the United States had turned against the Ottoman Empire, for example, at the end of December, Sir Cecil Spring-Rice (British Ambassador to Washington) informed the Foreign Office that ‘public opinion is extremely hostile to Turkey ... There is great interest in Palestine and Syria ...’.<sup>111</sup> Wilson’s enquiry to the belligerents of 20 December 1916, in which he asked them to state their peace terms, proved to be the catalyst for Britain to crystallise and articulate her new position on the Ottoman Empire, and thereafter it provided a frame of reference as is evident from a number of pamphlets that refer to it explicitly.<sup>112</sup>

The response to Wilson described the Ottoman State as ‘radically alien to Western Civilisations’ and its methods of government as a ‘murderous tyranny’.<sup>113</sup> Thereafter it was incumbent upon Wellington House to take a consistent line and seek to ensure the Turks were perceived unequivocally as the enemy. One of the earliest pamphlets of 1917 took up the task with verve and was distributed extensively.<sup>114</sup> Taken from an article published in *The Times* on 20 February 1917, by an anonymous author who was nevertheless stated as being ‘a distinguished authority on Oriental affairs’ with ‘exceptional experience of the ways of the Turk’, the pamphlet was entitled *The Clean Fighting Turk: A Spurious Claim, Apt Pupils of Prussianism*. It began by listing Turkish crimes which were described as ‘the most devilish policy that even this war has seen’ and included the massacre of Armenians, famine in Lebanon, exploitation of the

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., n.50, p.739. However, the US had invested heavily in missionary and educational schemes in the Ottoman Empire and for this reason and others the US sought to keep relations with Turkey friendly. They did not, for example, declare war on Turkey when they entered the conflict in 1917.

<sup>112</sup> See for example, Arnold Toynbee, *The Murderous Tyranny of the Turks* (London, 1917), E.F. Benson, *Crescent and Iron Cross*, Anon., *The King of Hedjaz and Arab Independence* (London, 1917), and Anon., *The Ottoman Domination*.

<sup>113</sup> Cited in Anon., *The Ottoman Domination*, p.3.

<sup>114</sup> Anon., *The ‘Clean Fighting Turk’* (reprinted from *The Times*) (London, 1917). As well as the coverage it obtained in *The Times* and in reproductions in the foreign press, 100,000 copies were ordered in pamphlet form including 32,000 copies for distribution in the United States, TNA FO 395/139/42320.

Muslims of Syria and of Jewish colonists, and abuse of British prisoners of war.<sup>115</sup> The purpose of the article was then stated to be to understand why, against a backdrop of such atrocities, some writers believed in the ‘sportsmanship and chivalry of the Turks’ which was described as a ‘favourite theme of some writers’.<sup>116</sup> The Turks had hoodwinked the West, explained the author, into believing them to be fine and upstanding whereas the reality was that the Turk was amoral and hypocritical:

His spurious reputation as a clean fighter he is glad enough to keep as a war asset. In defeat he knows the noble pose, just as in massacre he knows how to shuffle responsibility; when it is worth while he can assume the airs of a good fellow. He will give a truce to bury the dead just as readily as he will set fire to an Armenian prison, and spare a bandage for a wounded English prisoner left behind in a retreat just as deliberately as he will stick a knife into a pregnant Christian woman.<sup>117</sup>

Whilst these characteristics applied to all Turks, the Young Turk administration was especially odious because it had adopted the worst traits of German *Kultur*. Echoing earlier pamphlets on the barbarism of the Hun, the author claimed that embracing German *Kultur* had taken the Ottoman Empire ‘back to the forest, back to the tent, back to the palaeolithic state of mind’.<sup>118</sup> The Turks were also to be differentiated from other Muslims in the Empire. Whereas the Turks were little different from their ‘plundering Turanian ancestors’ they had absorbed a degree of intellectual sophistication from the Islamic peoples they had conquered. ‘Persians made it possible for Turks to express, if not understand, abstract ideas, Arabs influenced Turks with the thought of a Creator who was something more than a tribal mumbo-jumbo’.<sup>119</sup> Whilst the Turks had benefited from other Muslim cultures they had done nothing to nurture the peoples they

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<sup>115</sup> Anon., *The ‘Clean Fighting Turk’*, p.1.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p.1.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p.3-4.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p.3.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p.3.

had conquered and the author claimed that one of the aims of the Young Turk administration was to ensure the 'Arabs are ... robbed of tongue and leading'.<sup>120</sup>

The author of this pamphlet was Sir Mark Sykes who had written *The Times* article as part of an official effort to undermine the Turks and quash the legend of the 'clean fighting Turk' whilst simultaneously bolstering the reputation of the Arabs. In January Sykes had penned a confidential report in which he explained that portraying the Turks as 'good, honest, fond of children' and the Arabs as 'bad, black-hearted, rogue [sic.]' was counterproductive just as 'if on the Western front every fault of the French or Belgian peasants was magnified, and the courage, discipline, and resistance of the Germans was extolled, the situation would not be improved'.<sup>121</sup> A change in tack was also necessary to ensure the US could not view the British as inconsistent and hypocritical: a benevolent approach to the Turks ran contrary to their expression of 'horror and indignation [at the] Turkish treatment of Armenians and Arabs'.<sup>122</sup> Accordingly, henceforth efforts were to be made to ensure the press depicted the Turks in a similar light to the Germans. In contrast, the Arabs were to be distinguished from their overlords and portrayed favorably.

Sykes's report gave examples of the kind of press comment that was to be avoided. Attributed to G. Ward Price, the *Daily Mail's* correspondent at Salonika, the article stated, 'Here [Salonika] as in Gallipoli our men have formed a high opinion of the sportsmanlike qualities of the Turks as a soldier. Their treatment of any wounded who fall into their hands after an encounter seems to be as good as their more primitive organisation permits'.<sup>123</sup> Sykes also offered

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p.3.

<sup>121</sup> Appreciation of the Attached Arabian Report, No.XXVII, 25 January 1917, BL IO L/PS/10/586. Sykes's 'Appreciations' were commentaries on, and introductions to, material contained in a weekly report, the 'Arabian Report', in which he collated relevant dispatches from officers in the East and extracts from Cairo's *Arab Bulletin* for the guidance of the War Committee.

<sup>122</sup> Appreciation of the Attached Arabian Report, No.XXVI, undated but possibly 18 January 1917, BL IO L/PS/10/586.

<sup>123</sup> Arabian Report, N.S. No. XXVII, January 24, 1917, p.6, BL IO L/PS/10/586.

an example of the anti-Arab comment that was no longer acceptable. Again, in the *Daily Mail*, Edmund Chandler was reported to have written of the Marsh Arabs on 19 January, as follows: ‘The ‘mashoof’ [a type of canoe manoeuvred using a pole] is dear to the heart of that enemy of all men the Marsh Arab ... As no one trusts the Marsh Arab, and those not born in ‘mashoofs’ cannot keep them from capsizing its value for transport is nil’.<sup>124</sup> Elsewhere, Stephen Gaselee of the Foreign Office’s News Desk blamed ‘the illusion of the “Clean Fighting Turk”’ on ‘careless and exaggerated stories brought home from Gallipoli, and by foolish praise of Turkish treatment of General Townsend’.<sup>125</sup>

Sykes’s report stated that current public perceptions were contrary to ‘fact and policy’ and it was on the back of his observations that Hubert Montgomery of the Foreign Office wrote to Gowers at Wellington House instructing him to implement appropriate propaganda regarding the reputation of the Turk as a ‘clean fighter’.<sup>126</sup> The newness of this approach is reflected in Gowers’ confusion on receiving Montgomery’s letter. ‘I do not quite understand the suggestion of getting out something on “The Turk as a Clean Fighter,”’ he replied.

Is it meant to show that the Turk is a clean fighter, or that he is not a clean fighter? The obvious meaning is the former, but if this is so, how can we reconcile such an attitude with our efforts to hold him up to execration as the murderer of the Armenian nation, and with our official declaration that he is altogether so loathsome that he has got to be kicked out of Europe?<sup>127</sup>

Lloyd George himself clarified the new policy in a memo to Buchan dated 24 February 1917. ‘When you take in hand the question of Allied and Neutral

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid. Kipling had already been censored after he observed in *The Times* on 29 June 1916 in relation to submarine exploits that ‘one cannot rejoice over dead Mahommedans unless they are Arab’ (see L/PS/11/108/3347).

<sup>125</sup> Memorandum by Stephen Gaselee, 2 March 1917, TNA FO 395/139/79335.

<sup>126</sup> Montgomery to Gowers, 26 January 1917, TNA FO 395/139/18029.

<sup>127</sup> Gowers to Montgomery, 30 January 1917, TNA FO 395/139/25497.

propaganda, I am anxious you should pay special attention to the futility and iniquity of the Turk,' he instructed. 'His incapacity for good Government; his mis-rule, and above all, his massacres of all the industrious populations' were to be emphasised, as was that fact that far from being a homogenous land, the Ottoman Empire was made up of disparate peoples.<sup>128</sup> This was a propaganda campaign for allied and neutral nations, not the oppressed peoples of the Turkish Empire. It anticipated the carve up of the Empire and the positioning of Britain in relation thereto.

Ironically, Sykes, who was undoubtedly a key player in the institution of the new propaganda policy, was also an 'Eastern expert' guilty in the past of perpetuating the very impression of the Turks that he and the government now sought to dispel. In *Dar-ul-Islam*, published in 1904, he had expounded at length on the negative impact of the West on Eastern tradition and had praised Ottoman imperialism.<sup>129</sup> For example, he claimed that Syria was in a 'wonderfully flourishing condition' which he argued proved wrong those who believed the Turks were nothing more than 'greedy Pashas and incompetent officials'.<sup>130</sup> Although he respected desert Arabs, those who had corrupted themselves by living in towns warranted the deepest repugnance, hence the Arabs of Mosul were 'one of the most deplorable pictures one can see in the East' and the Turks were 'their immeasurable superiors'.<sup>131</sup> Sykes' bigotry was not limited to Arabs. Writing elsewhere, he described the Armenians as an 'abominable race' whom, he claimed, inspire even the most unprejudiced to feelings of 'contempt and hatred':

His cowardice, his senseless untruthfulness, the depth of his intrigue, even in the most trivial matters, his habit of hoarding, his lack of one manly virtue, his

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<sup>128</sup> Lloyd George to Buchan, 24 February 1917, TNA FO 395/139/42320.

<sup>129</sup> Mark Sykes, *Dar-ul-Islam, A Record of a Journey Through Ten of the Asiatic Provinces of Turkey* (London, 1904).

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., p.54.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., p.178.



helplessness in danger, his natural and instinctive treachery, together form so vile a character that pity is stifled and judgment unbalanced .... Even Jews have their good points but Armenians have none ...<sup>132</sup>

Sykes's volte face from Turcophile to champion of the Arabs, Armenians and Jews, provides a suitable illustration of the cynical manipulation of information for public consumption to further political ends. It also reveals the ease with which the stereotypes applied to one non-Western culture could be applied to another. Depending on prevailing policy, the Arabs, Turks, even the Armenians were effectively interchangeable as an Eastern 'other' against whom Britons could compare themselves: each and any of them could display attributes of duplicity, debauchery, cowardice, avarice and cruelty as the need arose.

Sykes's article kickstarted the campaign but Buchan understood what was required and a number of pamphlets and books were produced in 1917 and 1918 reinforcing and elaborating upon the position set out by Sykes. As will be seen, these pamphlets are wartime propaganda but they are also, emphatically, imperial texts in which the 'colonial gaze', as postcolonial theorists sometimes call it, is cast upon Ottoman Asia. The writers 'know' the East, and they 'know' Muslims. They have investigated, scrutinised and classified and, in so doing, established their authority, their entitlement to opine and to pass judgment on the future of the Ottoman peoples.

The stated aim of *The Ottoman Domination* was to introduce, to those unfamiliar with it, the history of the Ottoman Empire. The anonymous author asserted that it was an empire based on military domination and exploitation and that was why the Allies sought its dissolution. Unlike empires based on co-operation and tolerance, the Ottomans had failed to nurture their subject peoples:

A good Government would have arrested dissolution by making life worth living for the subject peoples within the Ottoman frontiers, and so giving them a positive

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<sup>132</sup> Mark Sykes, *Through Five Turkish Provinces* (London, 1900), p.80.

interest in the preservation of the Ottoman State. It would have granted fuller self-government to the “millets” [different communities within the Empire], more unrestricted freedom to the islanders and bedouin and mountaineers. It would have enlisted the warlike qualities of the Albanians, the seamanship of the Greeks, the horsemanship of the Arabs, the business ability of the Syrians, Armenians and Jews, the industry of the Bulgarian and Anatolian peasantry, and would have drawn all these elements together into a national State.<sup>133</sup>

Far from encouraging the attributes particular to different peoples within the Empire, the Young Turks had sought to ‘Ottomanise’ the Empire or destroy those whom it could not. Novelist, E.F. Benson, son of an Archbishop of Canterbury, declared in *Crescent and Iron Cross* that it was no surprise that the Germans found an ally in the Turks, a power that ‘adopted the same methods of absorption and extermination centuries before the Hohenzollerns ever started on their career of highway robbery’.<sup>134</sup> It was a ‘cancerous and devouring nation’.<sup>135</sup> Unsurprisingly, Arnold Toynbee went even further in *The Murderous Tyranny of the Turks* and denounced Turkey as a ‘Vampire-State’ that ‘literally drained its victims’.<sup>136</sup>

In *Turkey: A Past and a Future*, the anonymous author elegantly expounded on the different cultures and civilisations that the territories now claimed by the Empire had born witness to in the past but which under Turkish administration had been left to decay. ‘Turkey, the Ottoman State, is not a unity, climatic, geographical, racial or economic; it is a pretension, enforced by bloodshed and violence whenever and wherever the Osmanli government has power’.<sup>137</sup> Such assertions accorded precisely with Lloyd George’s instructions, reinforcing the claim that rather than seeking the dismantlement of an integrated body the Allies simply sought liberation for the Empire’s subject peoples as one ‘cannot

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<sup>133</sup> Anon., *The Ottoman Domination*, p.9.

<sup>134</sup> Benson, *Crescent and Iron Cross*, p.6.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Toynbee, *Murderous Tyranny*, p.12.

<sup>137</sup> Anon., *Turkey: A Past and A Future* (London, 1917), p.8.

dismember limbs that never belonged to the real trunk'.<sup>138</sup> Similarly, a number of the pamphlets emphasised that only forty per cent of the Empire were actually Turkish (around eight million out of a total population of around twenty million). Of the rest, seven million were Arabs, two million were Armenians (or were before the massacres) and the remainder were made up of mountain people such as the Kurds, Druses, Maronites and Nestorians.<sup>139</sup>

Canon Parfit ventured from the macro to the micro in *Mesopotamia: The Key to the Future* where he evocatively described the desolation wrought by the Ottomans in his parish along the banks of the Tigris where 'most of the children were brilliantly clad in nothing more than olive oil and a smile'.<sup>140</sup> Due to neglect of the river banks there was a profusion of bugs and frogs. '[The frogs] literally swarmed by the million in the swamps and pools. They were possessed of an astonishing variety of voices, so that you could hear their squeaking, squealing, singing, and croaking long before you came in sight of the reeds or could smell the odours of their watery home'.<sup>141</sup> According to Parfit, Turkish officials exploited the flooding of the river and encouraged the neglect and mismanagement of the region. He illustrated his point by explaining how, in pilgrimage season, the Turks would flood the pilgrim road by breaching the river banks and then charge exorbitant taxes to finance a pontoon bridge. If pilgrims were looted by robbers on the way to the bridge the Turkish officials would share the proceeds.<sup>142</sup>

The Ottoman provinces would fare much better, claimed a number of Wellington House's publications, including Parfit's, under the guiding hand of a 'protecting' Allied power. Hinting at the terms of the Inter-Allied (Sykes-Picot) Agreement

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<sup>138</sup> Benson, *Crescent and Iron Cross*, p.248.

<sup>139</sup> For example, see Toynbee, *Murderous Tyranny*.

<sup>140</sup> Canon J.T. Parfit, *Mesopotamia: The Key to the Future* (London, 1917), p.12.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15.

in relation to the Middle East, some of the pamphlets identified who the appropriate protecting power would be: Armenia would be Russia's, Syria and Palestine would be under French protection, England would take Mesopotamia because only England could restore the region to its former glory before the Turks rendered the territory which had once been so abundant into 'parched and weary lands'.<sup>143</sup> They had the resources, especially manpower, which would be supplied from Egypt and India, to restore Mesopotamia.

As in the Syria pamphlet of 1916, the later pamphlets continued to condemn the CUP as 'a set of clever knaves who, having seized the government, seemed to have no interest in anything but political adventures at Constantinople or their personal advantage'.<sup>144</sup> The disingenuous use of religion to support their war effort and their attempts to 'ottomanise' the Empire meant that the Turks could no longer claim leadership of the world's Muslim population. 'They forfeited the Caliphate when they proclaimed the Holy War against the Allied Powers – inciting Moslems to join one Christian coalition against another, not in defence of their religion, but for Ottoman political aggrandisement'.<sup>145</sup> Turkish failure to incite a global jihad was ascribed not just to the fact that Muslims in the British Empire appeared to prefer British rule, but also because they themselves deployed the call to Holy War without ever authentically believing in it. Their true political ideal was a nationalist one, which Harry Stuermer (a German journalist and Entente sympathiser) called 'race-fanaticism' – a policy which alienated all the other races in their Empire, not just the Armenians.<sup>146</sup> In Stuermer's opinion:

In little-informed circles in Europe people are still under the false impression that the Young Turks of to-day, the intellectual and political leaders of Turkey in this

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<sup>143</sup> Benson, *Crescent and Iron Cross*, p.234.

<sup>144</sup> Masterman, p.xii.

<sup>145</sup> Anon., *Turkey: A Past and a Future*, p.12.

<sup>146</sup> Harry Stuermer, *Two War Years in Constantinople: Sketches of German and Young Turkish Ethics and Politics* (London, 1917).

war, are authentic, zealous, and even fanatical Mohammedans, and superficial observers explain all unpleasant occurrences and outbreaks of Young Turkish jingoism on Pan-Islamic ground, especially as Turkey has not been slow in proclaiming her “Holy War.” But this conception is entirely wrong ... The truth is that the present political regime is the complete denial of the Pan-Islamic idea and the substitution of the Pan-Turkish idea of race.<sup>147</sup>

Stuermer may have benefited from an in-depth paper commissioned by the Department of Information from Arnold Toynbee (who, on the back of his work with Bryce, appears to have become one of Wellington House’s ‘go to’ authorities on Turkey). The paper was extremely scholarly, even by Wellington House’s standards, and Buchan decided it would be better used as background for propagandist material rather than circulated as propaganda in its own right. Pan-Turanianism was a reaction to Turkish failures in the Balkans, argued Toynbee, and the consequent abandonment of the ‘tradition of being a dominant race in Europe’ in favour of the development of its own ‘latent possibilities in Anatolia’.<sup>148</sup> Unable to rely on this movement outside of Anatolia, the CUP hypocritically exploited Pan-Islamism. Toynbee drew attention to the propagandist potential of the ideological conflict between Pan-Turanianism and Pan-Islam for the Allies in terms of the anti-Islamic and anti-Arab elements of the former, enabling writers such as Stuermer to pick up these themes in a more accessible form than Toynbee’s writing.<sup>149</sup>

Whilst the focus was undoubtedly upon Turkey’s poor record as an imperial power and on the recent shortcomings of the Unionists, the pamphlets that followed Sykes’s also found opportunities to identify other Turkish failings. The

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<sup>147</sup> Stuermer, p.190.

<sup>148</sup> Memorandum on the Pan-Turanian Movement by Arnold Toynbee, October 1917, TNA FO 395/139/226240.

<sup>149</sup> The ‘Turkification’ of Anatolia continues to be regarded by historians as the basis of understanding CUP wartime policy. Recent historiography indicates a shift away from attribution of motivation to ideological grounds and more towards what Reynolds describes as ‘a sober vision grounded in concrete geopolitical reasoning’ (Michael Reynolds, ‘Buffers, not Brethren: Young Turk Military Policy in the First World War and the Myth of Panturanism’ in *Past and Present*, no. 203 (May 2009), pps. 137-179, p. 138). The CUP adopted the means they considered most expedient to ensure the Empire’s survival and, to this end, both pan-Turanianism and pan-Islam were exploited.

Turks were written off as stolid and unintellectual, 'brave but stupid'.<sup>150</sup> According to Dr Niepage, a German who taught in Aleppo, '[w]e teachers, who have been teaching Greeks, Armenians, Arabs, Turks, and Jews in German schools in Turkey for years, can only declare that the pure Turks are the most unwilling and incapable of all our pupils'.<sup>151</sup> Echoing Hamilton's dismissal of the Turks on racial and ideological grounds (see Chapter One), Stuermer considered the 'value of the human material sacrificed' at Gallipoli by contrasting the dead Anatolians, 'accustomed to dirt and misery', with those 'cultured and highly civilised men ... [fighting] for the cause of civilisation'.<sup>152</sup> Frequently, Turkish military virtues continued to be ascribed solely to German influence. Accordingly, they only 'staved off their extinction by becoming ready pupils of those who have surpassed them in the military art'.<sup>153</sup> After the war Turkey would not pose a threat because she would be surrounded by allied nations and, in any event, by nature the peasantry of Anatolia were 'quiet, rather indolent folk'.<sup>154</sup>

Despite Wellington House's best efforts, the idea of the 'clean fighting Turk' never disappeared and a concurrent opinion remained that favoured them for their bravery, resilience, chivalry and piety. Stuermer, who had been present at Gallipoli, observed how he:

got to know the Turkish soldier with his stoical heroism in defence, and the brilliant attacking powers and courage of the Anatolians with their blind belief in their Padishah, as they were rushed to the defence of Stamboul and hurled themselves in a bayonet charge against the British machine-guns under a hail of shells from the sea. I gained a high opinion of Turkish valour and powers of resistance. I had no reason to stint my praise or withhold my judgment. In mess-

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<sup>150</sup> Stuermer, p.44.

<sup>151</sup> Martin Niepage, *The Horrors of Aleppo: Seen by a German Eyewitness* (London, 1917), p.21.

<sup>152</sup> Stuermer, p.44.

<sup>153</sup> Anon., *The Ottoman Domination*, p.5.

<sup>154</sup> Benson, *Crescent and Iron Cross*, p.250.

tents and at various observation-posts I made the personal acquaintance of crowds of thoroughly sympathetic and likeable Turkish officers.<sup>155</sup>

Whilst not perceived as having the efficiency or technological sophistication of the Germans they showed a “sportsmanlike” spirit’ worthy of respect.<sup>156</sup> Similarly, the Turks were capable of showing more compassion to their prisoners than were the Germans: ‘the Turk, when he does take prisoners, treats them kindly and chivalrously; but he takes few prisoners, for he knows only too well how to wield his bayonet in those murderous charges he makes’.<sup>157</sup>

Together with these conflicting notions there remained an enduring fear of Islamic fanaticism, a spectre that cut across all Muslim races and continued to appear in a variety of guises. For example, in *Crescent and Iron Cross*, Benson blamed the Armenian massacres on religious fanaticism despite the fact that the standard Wellington House approach was to blame it on CUP policy. Accordingly, he wrote, ‘Moslem fanaticism, ever smouldering and ready to burst into flames, blazed high, and a fury of massacres broke forth against all Armenians, east and west, north and south’.<sup>158</sup> In *Mesopotamia: The Key to the Future*, Canon Parfit claimed that over the course of history ‘untold atrocities have been committed in the name of the Prophet, and vast civilisations in Europe, North Africa, India, and the Near East have been laid desolate at different times by Moslem fanaticism’.<sup>159</sup> In *German Plots and British Triumphs in the Bible Lands*, Parfit describes Islam as being ‘a religion that has always fostered a fanatical hatred of Christianity’.<sup>160</sup> In the preface to *The Murderous Tyranny of the Turks*, Viscount Bryce conceded that the ‘Muslim peasant of Asia Minor is an honest, kindly fellow’ but only ‘when not roused by

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<sup>155</sup> Stuermer, p.43.

<sup>156</sup> Masterman, p.46.

<sup>157</sup> Stuermer, p.103.

<sup>158</sup> Benson, *Crescent and Iron Cross*, p.24.

<sup>159</sup> Parfit, *Mesopotamia*, p.36.

<sup>160</sup> Parfit, *German Plots*, p.6.

fanaticism'.<sup>161</sup> It would seem that underlying efforts to distinguish the barbaric Turks from other Muslims, and to indicate only respect for the Islamic faith, there remained a deeply entrenched fear and mistrust of Islamic fanaticism and its potential effect on Christianity and the Empire. As Eugene Rogan comments, in the context of his study of military events in the Middle East during the war, there is an irony in the fact that whilst colonial Muslims remained largely unreceptive to the Turkish call for jihad, the British lived in fear of Islamic fanaticism, illustrating that they, rather than the world's Muslim population, were the responsive ones.<sup>162</sup>

Finally, it is worth reiterating here that *al-Haqīqah* was, and remained, the only substantive propagandist vehicle produced by Wellington House targeting Muslims including, to a limited extent, Turks. Writing in February 1918, Toynbee asserted that he believed 'Wellington House has done no propaganda in Turkey hitherto'.<sup>163</sup> This omission was revisited in the spring of 1918 and Toynbee and Gowers produced notes suggesting possible propaganda aimed directly at Turkey. They considered the most effective means would be to condemn Germany and expound on how it was to blame for Turkish woes, suggesting instead, of course, that the Entente powers would have been better friends and could be again in the future. In Toynbee's opinion it was 'no use criticising Pan-Turanianism or commending King Hussein' and 'attacks on Germany have much more chance than attacks on the CUP'.<sup>164</sup> He suggested that E.F. Benson produce something 'in the style of his "Crescent and Iron Cross"'.<sup>165</sup> Gowers, whose note concerned propaganda among the 'lower classes', employed an *al-Haqīqah* style vernacular when he suggested something along the following lines:

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<sup>161</sup> Toynbee, *Murderous Tyranny*, p.6.

<sup>162</sup> Rogan, p.404.

<sup>163</sup> 'Propaganda in Turkey' by AJT, 5 February 1918, BL IO L/PS/11/132/655.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.



How much longer, O foolish Turks, are you going to continue being deceived by these wily Germans, whose only object is to exploit your country and make themselves rich by developing it? Do you think that they will let you have any of your own riches? Of course not – it is all for themselves.<sup>166</sup>

The India Office were unconvinced, Shuckburgh remarking that ‘whether any propaganda in Turkey wd. be likely to have much practical effect is a point on which the Dept. feels doubtful’.<sup>167</sup> There is no indication in the Schedule of Literature that Benson or anyone else did produce any such work.

## ***2.4 Armenia and Other Turkish Atrocities***

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Blue Book was completed in November 1916. It was released with considerably less fanfare than the White Book of the previous year, in which German atrocities against the French and Belgians had been recounted. In contrast to the White Book which was published in eleven different languages, it was only produced in English and only around four thousand five hundred copies were distributed to the United States.<sup>168</sup> Although its testimony was extensive, and graphic, exhausting the reader with its ‘repetitious instances of brutality and bloodshed’, Toynbee and Bryce had endeavored to present the evidence without any ‘spin’.<sup>169</sup> By 1917, however, once the new coalition’s position on the Ottoman Empire’s future had become unequivocal, the nature of Armenian-related propaganda became more vituperative. In the Preface to *The Murderous Tyranny of the Turks*, Viscount Bryce started with the premise, much expressed in Wellington House’s later pamphlets, that ‘the Turk was hopelessly unfit to govern, with any approach to

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<sup>166</sup> ‘Rough Materials for Propaganda among the lower classes’ by EG, 6 February 1918, BL IO L/PS/11/132/655.

<sup>167</sup> Minute by JE Shuckburgh, 26 February 1918, BL IO L/PS/11/132/655.

<sup>168</sup> Toynbee to Barton, 4 November 1916, TNA FO 96/206/356.

<sup>169</sup> McNeill, p.74

justice, subject races of a different religion'.<sup>170</sup> In fact, wrote Bryce, 'the Turk has never been of any use for any purpose except fighting'.<sup>171</sup> Whereas in Autumn 1915 Bryce had attributed the massacres to 'the gang of unscrupulous adventurers who are now in possession of the Government of the Turkish Empire' and claimed they were carried out for purely political reasons and without the approval of the Turkish population, by 1917 Bryce was ready to condemn the entire Turkish race.<sup>172</sup> In the body of the pamphlet Toynbee sought to explain why the stated Allied War Aims of 11 January 1917, in so far as they related to Turkey, were apt. In considering what was meant by the Turks' 'murderous tyranny', he used the material he had gathered for the Blue Book to describe in more emotive detail the 1915 atrocities and claimed that two-thirds of the Armenian population had been killed. The remaining third had survived by either converting to Islam or fleeing to Russia. For women, conversion meant a 'living death of marriage to a Turk and inclusion in his harem'.<sup>173</sup> Details were given of the suffering encountered by the Armenians on forced marches and in the inhospitable regions to which they were deported. Very brief mention was also made of the same campaign of extermination being waged by the Turks against the Nestorian Christians on the Persian frontier and also against the Arabs of Syria.

Like Toynbee's 1915 pamphlet, there is no trace of the bigoted attitudes towards Armenians evident in much pre-war writing. They were a 'peaceful and progressive nation' within a nest of vipers for the purposes of Wellington House's propaganda or else they were described as fellow Christians.<sup>174</sup> Conscious efforts were made to draw out physical similarities with Europeans, for example, by drawing attention to fair-complexioned Armenians, in order to elicit sympathy

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<sup>170</sup> Toynbee, *Murderous Tyranny*, p.4

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., p.4

<sup>172</sup> Toynbee, *Armenian Atrocities*, p. 6-7.

<sup>173</sup> Toynbee, *Murderous Tyranny*, p.15

<sup>174</sup> Benson, *Crescent and Iron Cross*, p.81

and compassion for their fate and to distinguish them from the Turks. One pamphlet described an Armenian child whom the author and his companions found abandoned in a wasteland, as having ‘a fair complexion, blue eyes, and golden hair’.<sup>175</sup> On another occasion, the same writer witnessed:

one of the servants of the *khân* carrying a little infant with hair as yellow as gold, who he threw behind the house. We asked him about it, and he said that there were three sick Armenian women in the house, who had lagged behind their companions, that one of them had given birth to this infant, but could not nourish it, owing to her illness. So it had died and been thrown out, as one might throw out a mouse.<sup>176</sup>

Accounts of gross abuse and torture were endless in the later pamphlets. In Chapter Three of *Crescent and Iron Cross*, Benson described some of the sexual atrocities committed by Muslims against Armenians. Notably, he did not attribute responsibility solely to the Turks but allowed for the committal of similar atrocities by the Kurds whom he did not hesitate to point out were fellow Muslims guilty of similar ‘horror and cruelty and bestial lust’.<sup>177</sup> He wrote, ‘in certain villages [around Mush] the girls and young women were given to the Kurd soldiery, who raped them publicly in the presence of their families, not sparing girls of eight and ten years of age, who then, bleeding and violated, were shot in company with the old women, for whom the Kurds (inspired by Allah, the God of Love) had no use’.<sup>178</sup> An epistolary account of an Armenian family’s misfortunes was provided in *From Turkish Toils: The Narrative of an Armenian*

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<sup>175</sup> Fâ’iz El-Ghusein, ‘Bedouin Notable of Damascus’ (1917), *Martyred Armenia* (Translated from the Original Arabic) (London, 1917), p.22. The existence of this author has been called into question and authorship ascribed to one of Wellington House’s writers possibly even Mark Sykes himself – see Justin McCarthy, ‘Tall Armenian Tale: The Other Side of the Falsified Genocide’ at [www.tallarmentiantale.com](http://www.tallarmentiantale.com) (accessed 30/06/2015). India Office papers indicate, however, that they at least believed him to be a real person. The pamphlet had been published in Bombay and sent to London from Cairo. Hirtzel enquired of officials in India as to whether they knew him but he could not be found (Governor of Bombay to India Office, 18 April 1917, BL IO L/PS/11/120/1309).

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., p.19

<sup>177</sup> Benson, *Crescent and Iron Cross*, p.81.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., p.72.

*Family's Escape* by Mrs Esther Mugerditchian. It contains one of the most graphic and grotesque of all the tales of abuse. Amidst a range of other tortures,

[Professor Tenekedjian]'s moustache and beard were so pitilessly plucked out that when he was shown to [Professor Soghigian] he could not recognise him, notwithstanding his friendship of over thirty years. There was no limit to the flogging he endured. They crushed his hands and feet in the press, and pulled out his nails with pincers; they pierced his face with needles, and put salt on the wounds; they forced him to take eggs out of boiling water and put them under his armpits until they cooled.<sup>179</sup>

Mugerditchian was explicit in her condemnation of the Germans whom she claimed had behaved equally cruelly towards the Armenians. 'It was rumoured that the German Consul in Erzeroum was the first to kidnap a beautiful Armenian girl. The Germans behaved everywhere as cruelly as the Turks towards us Armenians'.<sup>180</sup>

As the war progressed opinions crystallised regarding who was responsible for the atrocities. The commonly held position was that central government in Constantinople initiated the policy but the Turks and Kurds were easily incited to carry it out. Thus, in *Turkey: A Past and a Future*, the anonymous author claimed 'the Armenians were not massacred spontaneously by the local Moslems; the initiative came entirely from the Central Government at Constantinople'.<sup>181</sup> As discussed in the previous section, Wellington House was generally keen to claim that neither the CUP nor the Turkish population were motivated by religion. Ascribing CUP policy to extreme nationalism or 'race-fanaticism', and dismissing their call for Holy War as cynical exploitation, served to downplay the threat of pan-Islamism, but, more importantly, it was a means of distinguishing the caliphate, the highest Islamic authority, from secular

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<sup>179</sup> Esther Mugerditchian, *From Turkish Toils: The Narrative of an Armenian Family's Escape* (London, 1918), p.15.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., p.20.

<sup>181</sup> Anon., *Turkey: A Past and A Future*, p.20.

government in Constantinople thereby undermining CUP prestige and protecting the sensibilities of the British Empire's Muslims. Indeed, argued El-Ghusein, in *Martyred Armenia*, CUP actions were such that good Muslims should no longer consider the Ottoman government as rightful heir to the caliphate. In committing atrocities against the Armenians, the Unionists had acted in contravention of Islamic law and therefore could not claim to be more than a nationalist government:

Is it right that these imposters, who pretend to be the supporters of Islam and the *Khilâfat*, the protectors of the Moslems, should transgress the command of God, transgress the Koran, the Traditions of the Prophet, and humanity? Truly, they have committed an act at which Islam is revolted, as well as all Moslems and all the peoples of the earth, be they Moslems, Christians, Jews, or idolaters.<sup>182</sup>

Whilst policy was dictated by the CUP, the co-operation of the populace was blamed less on religious or ethnic hatred than on avarice and depravity. This served to differentiate the perpetrators from 'good Muslims' who understood that the Armenian atrocities were at odds with the precepts of Islam.<sup>183</sup>

Although few viewed the Germans as having participated directly in either CUP policy-making or in committing the atrocities, their acquiescence to CUP policy meant that they too were seen as culpable. Harry Stuermer's view that 'the German Government was equally responsible with the Turks for the atrocities they allowed them to commit' was generally held.<sup>184</sup> Their willingness to intervene only when self-interest dictated was seen as evident from their approach toward anti-Jewish activities in Palestine. It was argued that they intervened there not for humanitarian reasons but because there were a large number of German-speaking Jews in Palestine. 'The Jews were potential Germans, and Germany, who sat by with folded hands when Arabs and

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<sup>182</sup> El-Ghusein, p.21.

<sup>183</sup> Stuermer, p.117.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

Armenians were led to torture and death, put up a warning finger, and, for the present, saved them'.<sup>185</sup>



We British are fighting for our Empire. I do not speak in the Imperialistic sense when I use the word "Empire." We are fighting for those free peoples of European stock, our Colonies beyond the seas who live in democratic communities, and we are fighting so that we may carry democracy, civilisation, and progress into Asia in the years to come.<sup>186</sup>

This extract from Sykes's August 1917 speech in the House of Commons aptly illustrates the way in which Britain attempted to reshape her imperial mission during the war, a process reflected in the changing nature of Wellington House's pamphlets and books. Empire-building was to be dissociated from aggression, acquisition and exploitation, which was to be exclusively and emphatically the domain of the Central Powers. Although British writers conceded that 'at first sight' the British Empire seemed to be 'the greatest example of that spirit of conquest and of military dominion against which we are striving' it had become imperative to convince allies and neutrals that, on the contrary, British imperialism was entirely in tune with the causes for which the Allied Powers were allegedly fighting.<sup>187</sup> Stemming from her historical antecedent as 'the inventor of political liberty on the scale of the great nation-state', and her avowedly altruistic imperial track record, Britain sought to establish her claim to the role of chief proponent of, and stimulant for, the 'growth of vigorous free communities'.<sup>188</sup> Ensuring 'imperialism' was understood as an ideology whose essence was benevolent, nurturing and self-sacrificing, had become the propagandists' task.

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<sup>185</sup> Benson, *Crescent and Iron Cross*, p.149.

<sup>186</sup> Mark Sykes, 1 August 1917, Hansard, HC Deb, 5th ser., vol.96, cc.2203-4.

<sup>187</sup> Ramsay Muir, *The Character of the British Empire* (New York, 1917), p.1.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5

The civilisation/barbarian dichotomy of the early years of the war, was given, in 1917 and 1918, a specifically imperial context. Both German and Turkish imperialism were identified as the antithesis of the causes Britain now espoused. Empire, as a positive construction, was recreated as a 'global cultural system'<sup>189</sup>: a means of achieving 'a common freedom, in which every race and nationality may participate with complete self respect, playing its part, according to its own character, in one great world community'.<sup>190</sup> In the short-term this offered Britain a 'crucial breathing-space', the opportunity to retain her territory and extend it into the lands of the dismantled Ottoman Empire: the lexicon of imperialism had been shaped to accord with that of self-determination and nationalism but in reality it provided a smokescreen for more traditional aggrandizement.<sup>191</sup> Longer term, however, the new vision sowed the seeds for the decline of imperial Britain. The sweepingly universal terms in which Wilson, and consequently the other Allied powers, expressed the principles of self-determination inevitably became powerful tools 'for undermining the legitimacy and therefore the viability of the arrangements of empire'.<sup>192</sup>

Britain's changing approach to the Turks in 1917 and 1918 was triggered by the need to account to Wilson but also reflected revised objectives in terms of military and diplomatic policy as well as confidence in the diminution of the pan-Islamic threat. The consequence was greater license for the propagandists to criticise the Turks whether on the grounds of their imperial record, their war record or otherwise. What is evident from the publications is that the tendency to depict the Turkish population as incompetent, immoral and greedy, and the CUP leadership as cynical and secular, largely overrode their depiction as fanatical

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<sup>189</sup> A term used by Diane Robinson-Dunn in *The Harem, Slavery and British Imperial Culture: Anglo-Muslim relations in the late nineteenth century* (Manchester, 2006), p.3.

<sup>190</sup> HG Wells, *Memorandum on the General Principles of Propaganda*, 21 March 1918, TNA INF 4/9.

<sup>191</sup> John Darwin, *The Empire Project, The Rise and Fall of the British World System, 1830-1970* (Cambridge, 2009), p.308.

<sup>192</sup> Manela, p.xii.

Mohammedans. Even in the context of the Armenian massacres, Wellington House sought to avoid defining the Turks by their religion. Donald Bloxham complains that scholarship on the genocide tends to consign it 'to the realms of murky interplay between barbarous orientals'.<sup>193</sup> What the government's propaganda reveals is that contemporary writing was more nuanced, not necessarily because contemporary observers possessed a more astute understanding of the geopolitical situation, or were less prejudiced, but because matters of policy demanded commentary that was more than just a reliance on stock caricatures regarding less-civilised Orientals. Whilst the perceived pan-Islamic threat had diminished, an underlying fear of Islamic fanaticism remained, as did an awareness of the ongoing need to keep the British Empire's Muslim subjects on side. Both factors demanded sophisticated handling, epitomised, for example, in efforts to excise the caliphate from condemnation of the Ottoman government, ascription of the Armenian massacres to pan-Turanianism rather than pan-Islam, and efforts to avoid biblical and crusading references in accounts of the fall of Jerusalem.

The maintenance of prestige also remained of paramount concern as evidenced by the ongoing support for *al-Haqīqah* and the other Muslim papers despite Robert Donald's objections. As well as acting as a recruiting device, they were a simple and effective means of conveying not only the might and reach of the Empire and its war effort, but also its tolerant and embracing attitude towards other peoples and religions. Ironically, considering the attitude of Donald and his cohort, these papers possibly best represent the means by which Wellington House did indeed address the need, so ardently championed by the press barons, to provide effective propaganda in pictorial form for the masses. The emphasis on British tolerance and enlightenment in *al-Haqīqah* was also a common feature of books and pamphlets which highlighted, for example, the sensitive treatment of Muslim prisoners of war and the respect awarded sacred Islamic sites.

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<sup>193</sup> Bloxham, p.25.



However, whilst the British portrayed themselves as the ‘friend’ of Islam, when it came to the Ottomans it had become necessary to distinguish the Turks from their fellow Muslims, the Arabs. Depicting the Arabs as an oppressed minority awaiting liberation from their tyrannical and impious, even atheistic, Ottoman overlords became a cornerstone of Wellington House’s Eastern propaganda as Chapter Three will demonstrate.

### Chapter Three – Mark Sykes and Middle Eastern Propaganda

*'It is the day for the man with a "line". And the man who has made a speciality of Turkey should be in his element at the present moment'.<sup>1</sup>*

In Chapter Two some of the propagandist writing of Sir Mark Sykes was analysed and proffered as evidence of the cynical way in which Wellington House sought to manipulate public opinion towards the Turks. It would be easy to leave his role at that, to present him as a typical British imperialist who cynically exploited the decline of the Ottoman Empire, the Armenian atrocities, and the war, to further extend the power and reach of the British Empire. To further add to Sykes's odiousness, it was he who, in 1916, imperiously 'drew the line in the sand' with which the Middle East was carved up for consumption by the Entente Powers, resulting in the infamous Sykes-Picot Agreement which is still cited as a cause of the region's current strife, not least in relation to Syria's civil war, and mention of the Agreement continues to meet with anger and hostility against the West, and particularly the British and Americans, from the region's Arabs in political centres such as Baghdad, Damascus and Cairo.<sup>2</sup> In this context too, Sykes is frequently depicted as an arrogant, overweening imperialist, representative of all that was culpable and reprehensible about the British imperial project.<sup>3</sup> This chapter will endeavor to illustrate that to dismiss Sykes in this way is to miss the many ways in which his actions and his writing can inform and enlighten on contemporary thinking regarding the East, the Empire and British society. Sykes is uniquely placed in this regard. Not only was he arguably the defining player in determining British policy in the Middle

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<sup>1</sup> *Country Life*, 4 December 1915.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, interview with Sherard Cowper-Coles, former British Ambassador in Israel, Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan at <http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/radio4/transcripts/01072013-anlaysis-syria.pdf>, accessed 13/07/2013, who describes the agreement as part of 'the intellectual lifeblood of most Arabs, and very much part of the resentment they feel against Britain and America for the state their region finds itself in today'. In August 2014, Islamic State tweeted that it was "'smashing Sykes-Picot"' when it declared a caliphate in northern Syria and Iraq (see Rogan, p.405).

<sup>3</sup> Said described Sykes's agenda as 'preserving the Orient and Islam under the control of the White Man' (*Orientalism*, p.237-8).

East (a term which gained currency during the war due in part to Sykes himself), but more importantly for the purposes of this research, he was also the key figure in shaping public perceptions of the region and its people, and Britain's relationship with it. Indeed, if one accepts that 'how states see—or don't see—is ... a matter intricately bound up with cultural history' Sykes was doubly influential, shaping policy not only as government adviser but also through the effect on policy makers of the cultural construction of ideas about the Middle East.<sup>4</sup>

Whilst Sykes may not have been the only writer or politician to express views on these subjects, his position as a politician of repute, a baronet with all the social connections that entailed, an established writer, and a soldier, gave him unrivaled exposure and opportunity. Engaged by various government departments from early 1915 until the end of the war as an expert on the region, his influence, both politically and publicly, had official endorsement. Prolific, and seemingly inexhaustible, his output included books, journal and newspaper articles, advisory papers for the government, parliamentary speeches, and a large volume of personal letters to important wartime figures. Most significantly for the purposes of this thesis, it was Sykes who galvanised the 'Eastern propaganda' section of Wellington House into action in 1916 and who, aside from 'The Clean Fighting Turk' article referred to in Chapter Two, was instrumental in the creation of *al-Haqīqah* and produced or was involved in the publication of a number of other important propaganda pieces. With a fluent and energetic style, he was adept at picking up the fashionable vernacular of the time and hence his output also reflected the broader trends in wartime writing relating to the Empire and Islam and identified in the preceding chapters.

As this chapter will elucidate, Sykes's influence at a political and diplomatic level reached a peak in 1916 and then waned in the final stages of the war. He

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<sup>4</sup> Satia, p.4.

became a passionate advocate of the region's minority causes, namely Arab and Armenian independence, as well as Zionism. As many of his contemporaries observed, the obsessive, single-mindedness with which he pursued the causes he espoused inevitably resulted in a parting of ways with those who viewed the problems of the region through a more pragmatic lens.<sup>5</sup> However, despite an increasing lack of synergy between his personal views and those of the government, his voice remained a cogent and powerful vehicle for the transmission of official policy for popular consumption until the end of the war.

All the multifarious forms of Sykes's writings will be considered, including his parliamentary speeches recorded in Hansard. Beginning with Sykes's prewar, pro-Turkish stance, this chapter will attempt to offer further insights into Edwardian Britain's complex relationship with the East before turning to the war years. As in preceding chapters, the period 1914-18 will be split into two sections. The first concerns the period up to the signing of the Sykes-Picot Agreement in May 1916, a period when Sykes's writing reflected a continued lack of animus towards the Ottoman Empire, even as attitudes against its survival were hardening, as well as an ongoing lack of self-consciousness in relation to his bullish, old-school approach towards British imperialism. In the second wartime section Sykes's writing reflected the shift in Ottoman-related policy and the re-shaping of British imperialism, in line with Wilsonian ideals, whereby Britain retained power and influence by becoming a facilitator in the path of the region's oppressed minorities to freedom and self-determination. In the process, it also endeavours, without seeking to exculpate, to put the Sykes-Picot Agreement into its cultural context, identifying Sykes less as an immoral imperialist, and more as a protagonist who, in keeping with the times, saw his primary responsibility as furthering British interests, but who soon grasped that

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Ms. Recollections of Mark Sykes by D.G. Hogarth, undated, HHC DDSY2/10/16 (reproduced on microfilm at BL Or.Mic 14156, as are all other DDSY2 documents unless otherwise stated).

the terms of the agreement he had negotiated were out of step with the changing imperatives of British imperialism.

### ***3.1 Sykes Before the War***

At first glance Sykes appears an archetypal Establishment figure of the Edwardian era. Educated at public school and Cambridge, he became an MP in his early thirties and was heir to a large Yorkshire estate. There were, however, two aspects of his life that set him apart from his peers. He was a Catholic and hence of a minority faith, and as a youth he experienced the stigma and trauma of being the son, and only child, of Lady Jessica Sykes, notorious for committing adultery, gambling and falling into debt, and a woman who scandalized London when she sued her husband, Sykes's father, in a highly-publicised court case. The young Sykes was painfully aware of the notoriety attached to his name and determined to rise above it. He had travelled with his father in the Near East and it captured his imagination and became an abiding passion and means of escape. Writing to a friend in 1900, when he was twenty-one, he observed:

I can see that it is absolutely necessary to prove that I am an individual of fairly balanced mind, owing to all the rows and scandals which have taken place in the last few years ... I wish to be known as a person fairly versed in Eastern affairs, which I shall try to be, but even if I am not, I may contrive to make people think I am, which is half the battle.<sup>6</sup>

He wanted to be respected and taken seriously and saw expertise in Eastern affairs as a means of doing this but he never became an Orientalist in the traditional sense. He did not learn Arabic, Turkish or Persian, nor did he study Islamic religion, history or civilisation. He did not have a background in the diplomacy or the politics of the region either. He put himself forward as an authority solely on account of his personal experience as a traveller in the Ottoman Empire – experience founded on ‘innumerable conversations with

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<sup>6</sup> Leslie, p.72, citing a letter from Sykes to Henry Cholmondeley, 5 August 1900.

policemen, muleteers, mullahs, chieftains, sheep drovers, horse dealers, carriers and other people capable of giving one first hand information [via a translator...]' – and so, whilst he certainly had knowledge of a sort, much of his reputation was indeed contrived and convinced the layman but rarely serious scholars or professional diplomats with experience of the East.<sup>7</sup> That he established a name for himself before the war can be credited in large part to the quality of his writing. Always highly subjective, it was never dull. Indeed, it was lively, evocative, imaginative and sensuous, summoning for the reader all the flavours of the Orient.<sup>8</sup> Writing to Sykes on the publication of his first travel book, *Through Five Turkish Provinces*, Rudyard Kipling commented that he had been unable to go to bed until he had finished it and that 'it had enabled him to see and smell the Ottoman Empire as never before'.<sup>9</sup>

As noted in Chapter Two, Sykes was a Turcophile, who admired the simplicity and piety of the archetypal Anatolian peasant. Like others, he saw Western influences as potentially corrupting and was particularly critical of the insidious influence of European financiers on the Ottoman Empire which was not only exploitative but paved the way for European territorial expansion and control of Ottoman territory. In parliament he warned,

[O]ne can see what inevitably must happen: the spheres of interest are staked out, then the concessionaires begin their work, the taxes are engulfed by concessions, and then someone is killed, and something goes wrong, and the moment is ripe, and the spheres of interest must inevitably become territory.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Mark Sykes, 'The Kurdish Tribes of the Ottoman Empire' in *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol.38, Jul-Dec. 1908, pp.451-486, p.451.

<sup>8</sup> Satia would describe it as 'profoundly anti-empirical' reflecting an obsession amongst contemporary travelers in the region with the Arabia of the imagination rather than reality. See Satia, p.111.

<sup>9</sup> Adelson, p.102. (Mark Sykes, *Through Five Turkish Provinces* (London, 1900)).

<sup>10</sup> Mark Sykes, 18 March 1914, Hansard, HC Deb, 5th ser., vol. 59, cc.2167.

Sykes also challenged those who took the superiority of Western civilisation as a given.<sup>11</sup> Writing on the newspaper coverage of the Russo-Japanese war in 1905, he observed to a friend, 'I have never been able to see why sleeping on a soft bed, travelling at great rates of speed, eating good food, or wearing ugly clothes should make a man more or less civilized'.<sup>12</sup> A sardonic list produced by Sykes (seemingly for his own amusement) and entitled 'Things that are lacking in the East owing to absence of European ideals of civilization' illuminates exactly what he liked about the East and thought was wanting in the West. The list included:

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<sup>11</sup> H.G. Wells commented in relation to the publication of *Through Five Turkish Provinces* that he liked Sykes' "'down" on Civilization and such like!', Adelson, p.102.

<sup>12</sup> Leslie, p.82, citing a letter from Sykes to Dowling, 25 March 1902.

Hordes of discontented labourers and workmen  
 Snobbery in all its forms  
 Members of Parliament  
 Commercial Imperialism  
 Religious doubts  
 Bad manners  
 Stock-brokers  
 Inane games  
 Professional Footballers  
 Jews in High Places  
 Self-advertising Prigs  
 German philosophers  
 Vulgar people  
 Brewery peerage  
 Progress  
 Decadent writers  
 IBSEN [sic.]  
 New Women  
 Rudyard Kipling  
 Wagner Music  
 Reviews of Reviews of Reviews  
 Socialists<sup>13</sup>

It reveals that, like many of his peers, Sykes was misogynistic, anti-semitic, snobbish and reactionary. He believed in traditional values and society and, from the luxury of his privileged position, was contemptuous of materialism, jingoism, and modernity. As landlord to a large number of tenants on his Yorkshire estate, he espoused an almost feudal relationship between employer and employee, a relationship that remained palpable in the East but which had given way in the West to progress and hence, in his view, to a discontented labour force. As Elie Kedourie observed, for Sykes the East preserved an enviable social order and religious ethic that had been lost in the West:

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<sup>13</sup> Ms., undated but approximately 1913, HHC DDSY2/4/30.



A social order compounded of small, intimate communities; authority hallowed by mercy, descending by small visible degrees from governor to governed; lord and serf, rich man and poor man rooted in the dignities and obligations of their station, owing respect to each other, and moved neither by fear nor contempt; all doing homage in their lives and thoughts to the divine eternal order of which their society on earth was but the mirror. This was what the West once had been and what the East still was.<sup>14</sup>

However, Sykes was not naïve enough to think that progress could be avoided in the East any more than it could in the West, and he pondered at length over how matters could be improved. In 1913, for example, he formulated a scheme for the education of young Turks in England.<sup>15</sup> Foreign control was useless, he argued, because, as soon as it was removed, there would be an immediate relapse, ‘just as would [occur in] Egypt or India if the handful of British officials were removed’.<sup>16</sup> Instead it was necessary to improve homegrown material. The problem with the ruling class in Turkey was that it ‘has been reared in infancy in a home where there is neither order, cleanliness, punctuality nor discipline’.<sup>17</sup> Distinguishing the ‘virtuous peasantry’ from the effete ruling class, he argued that the latter needed to be removed from their environment and instilled with ‘health, character, probity and energy’. In other words, they needed to be masculinized. This could best be achieved ‘in the most bracing part of the North of England’ where a training college could be established with the object of producing a regenerated civil service that would in turn lead to a regenerated Ottoman Empire. He proposed that ‘English public school lines should be followed as much as possible, with the exception that fagging should not be allowed’.<sup>18</sup> The latter proviso was possibly to prevent any ‘secret or unnatural

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<sup>14</sup> Kedourie, *England and The Middle East*, p.71.

<sup>15</sup> ‘*Scheme for Establishing a School in the North of England for Young Turks to be raised as future civil servants of the Ottoman Empire*’, undated, HHC DDSY2/4/40.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

vice' which Sykes was particularly concerned to avoid because of the correlation he saw between that and subsequent licentious and immoral behaviour.<sup>19</sup>

Despite Sykes's faith in the English public school system, he did not propose that the Turkish pupils should simply be given a Western education. Contrary to those 'jingos, little Englanders, officials and journalists and a host of worthy folk' who promoted schemes for a Western education, he advocated that English methods should be applied to Turkish cultural and religious practices.<sup>20</sup> Not only would this foster self-improvement but it would preclude hostility between East and West:

I feel that it is very necessary that someone should draw attention to the fact that neither the wearing of tweeds, the smoking of briars, nor the possession of diplomas and degrees obtained competitively at American mission schools do in the slightest degree produce a love of English men or indeed any sort of European in Asiatic or African Breasts. A man whom you have deliberately robbed of his good manners, good taste, philosophy, art, poetry, self-respect and religion does not easily forgive, and strange as it may appear is never grateful to you for your good offices.<sup>21</sup>

Sykes remained certain of the importance of a united Ottoman Empire and essentially optimistic about her future up to and including 1914. Her significance to Britain was emphasised in his well-received maiden speech as an MP in November 1911 when he stated that 'Turkey is going downhill, she is bound in debt, and yet I am certain that a strong and united Turkish Empire is as important to English commerce and strategy now as it was in the time of Lord Beaconsfield, and, perhaps, even more so'.<sup>22</sup> Writing after the Balkan War of

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<sup>19</sup> He viewed masturbation amongst young boys, seemingly a uniquely Eastern vice, as particularly reprehensible.

<sup>20</sup> Ms. draft article on imposing Western education in the East, undated, HHC DDSY2/6/7.

<sup>21</sup> Ms. letter to the press from Sykes about the ill effects of Western influence in Egypt and the Middle East, undated, HHC DDSY2/4/44.

<sup>22</sup> Mark Sykes, 27 November 1911, Hansard, HC Deb, 5th ser., vol.32, cc.102.

1912 he observed that ‘Turkey has still energies and resources, human and material, capable of making her a first class power in 25 years and in fifty a power of greater importance than Germany is to-day’.<sup>23</sup> All that was needed was ‘guidance’ from an appropriate Western power.

Sykes’ passion for (elements of) the East has been dismissed by some historians as little more than the whim of an aristocratic Edwardian traveller who enjoyed the novelty of ‘slumming it’ in a medieval world during his holidays and relished the romance and poetry of a mythical Orient.<sup>24</sup> It is suggested here that his pre-war writings reveal a deeper, more tenacious interest than the superficial enthusiasm of a tourist briefly passing through. His experience of Turkish society struck a chord with the values he held most dear, values explored in Chapter One and which were common to his peer group, such as chivalry, duty and piety. Like many others, he viewed modern Western influence as a corrupting presence in the East rather than a cause for celebration, reflecting his own disenchantment with Edwardian Britain. However, whilst he disapproved of those who mistook modernity for civilisation, he was unquestioningly patriotic and an unequivocal supporter of those values that he considered integral to the idea of British civilisation which were not the fripperies of twentieth-century living but core values, such as justice, freedom and, of course, the imperial project.

He approved most heartily of those British imperialists who sought to penetrate the East without seeking to Westernize it. ‘Personally,’ he wrote, to his Cambridge tutor, celebrated Orientalist E.G. Browne,

the only English Imperialists in the East I admire are men like Clive, Nicholson, Burton, Napier and Gordon, because they can manage the East without worrying it. It is an extraordinary fact that the consuls in Turkey who keep order are the few

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<sup>23</sup> Draft letter to ‘Your Highness’ from Sykes about future of Turkey, undated, HHC DDSY2/4/45.

<sup>24</sup> See James Barr, *A Line in the Sand: Britain, France and the Struggle for the Mastery of the Middle East* (London, 2011), p.10.

military consuls because they can ride, shoot and give an order and never bother natives about cant and nonsense such as rights of man.<sup>25</sup>

It was only men such as these who could really understand or govern the East:

Strange as it may appear, these qualities of the ordinary English country gentleman, help a man to describe and understand the Ottoman Empire and its inhabitants better than the most complete mastership of Turkish and Arabic grammar coupled with a profound knowledge of Oriental Mysticism.<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps it is this quotation that best illuminates Sykes's pre-war stance. Not only does it make allowance for his personal lack of expertise, but it depicts the Ottoman Empire as a place of adventure and one that satisfied a nostalgic craving for aspects of Western society sacrificed in the interests of modernity.

The importance of commanding respect, or the maintenance of prestige, was not lost on Sykes and he saw similarities in this regard between Turkish and British imperial methods. In contrast, after a visit to North Africa in 1911, he noted that 'the French are incapable of commanding respect, they are not sahibs, they have no gentlemen, the officers have no horses or guns or dogs, they do not appeal to the sense of reverence of the people and yet they do not amalgamate'.<sup>27</sup> In other words, the French neither safeguarded their perceived superiority, and hence their entitlement to rule, nor assimilated. Consequently, their imperial project was doomed to failure. Another key to success, namely, tolerance towards local religious and cultural traditions, was a further trait Ottoman and British imperialism shared. As Sykes noted in relation to India, 'if the Moslem world is against us we are done. We only rule by favour of Moslems because we play the

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<sup>25</sup> Leslie, p.179, citing a letter from Sykes to Browne, 3 December 1907. Burton, legendary primarily for his journey in disguise to the forbidden places of the Hejaz, was, according to his friend, Lord Redesdale, 'the only man I knew who could fire the old fashioned elephant-gun from the shoulder without a rest; his powers of endurance were simply marvellous, and he could drink brandy with a heroism that would have satisfied Dr Johnson' (See Robert Irwin, *The Arabian Nights: A Companion* (London, 1994), p.28).

<sup>26</sup> Undated draft and ts. book review by Sykes of *A Military Consul in Turkey* by AF Townshend (1910), HHC DDSY2/4/55.

<sup>27</sup> Adelson, p.135, citing a letter from Sykes to his wife Edith, 26 February 1911.

game nine times out of ten'.<sup>28</sup> Whilst the Turks and the British may have shared characteristics, the Turks were 'Orientals' and Sykes was keen to underline the fact that only an authentic traveller like himself was able to really understand them and guide the uninitiated. As he wrote in *Dar-ul-Islam*, 'few Europeans who have lived among them all their lives would admit that they had fathomed more than their own ignorance'.<sup>29</sup> In any event, he cautioned that to get to know them too well could lead to the horror of all horrors, assimilation: 'it is not a good thing to know too much of orientals; if you do, perhaps you may wake up one morning and find you have become one'.<sup>30</sup>

It was acceptable to admire and understand but, in keeping with the Victorian imperial tradition, not to assimilate and Sykes was, at heart, an unquestioning supporter of 'old-school' British imperialism. For example, in February 1914, he contributed to a debate on a failed military engagement in 1913 between a British-backed force, led by a British officer, Captain Corfield, and the 'Mad Mullah' of Somaliland. Corfield died in the engagement and was censured posthumously for exceeding orders when he attacked the Mullah. Sykes (and many others in Parliament) defended Corfield and observed that criticising him was like 'censuring Wolfe, or Clive, or Nicholson, or Gordon, or anyone who has not only been prepared to give his life but also his reputation for his nation'.<sup>31</sup> Soldierly initiative and aggression were key to British imperial success: 'It seems to me that as things stand at present, that we hold Egypt, Cyprus and India only because people in the past have done just the sort of thing that Mr Corfield did,

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<sup>28</sup> Leslie, p.201, citing a letter from Sykes to Browne, 9 November 1911.

<sup>29</sup> Mark Sykes, *Dar-ul-Islam, A Record of a Journey Through Ten of the Asiatic Provinces of Turkey* (London, 1904), p.171.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. As Douglas Kerr writes, "Knowing the Oriental" was essential in order to control the Orient. But knowing the Oriental too well weakened that epistemological and political barrier whose function was to keep people, rulers and ruled, in their proper places', *Eastern Figures, Orient and Empire in British Writing* (Hong Kong, 2008), p.237.

<sup>31</sup> Mark Sykes, 24 February 1914, Hansard, HC Deb, 5th ser., vol. 58, cc.1678.

and we shall only go on holding them because we have got men prepared to do what Mr Corfield did'.<sup>32</sup>

Anglo-Saxons were a fighting race, and away from the effete Constantinople intellectuals, the Turks were too. Sykes drew explicit parallels between the English Tommy and the stolid Turkish soldier who, in his opinion, shared astoundingly similar character traits. If anything, Little Mehmet held the upper hand as 'the Turk has not that capacity for grumbling at trifles, that unfrugality, or that love of swilling beer which are our own soldiers worst points, nor again has our soldier that ferocity which lies at the bottom of every Turk's heart'.<sup>33</sup> Sykes was awe-struck by the fatalism of Islamic soldiers and the way in which it made them careless of their own lives. During a speech in Parliament, he recounted an anecdote from a journey he had made in 1905 when he observed a Turkish general 'smoking cigarettes in the [powder] magazine while the men were digging out the shells with steel-pointed picks. The people are fatalists. They do not take the same view as scientific people who are not fatalists'.<sup>34</sup>

To conclude, Sykes had an astute understanding of what made the British imperial project successful. He recognised the importance of maintaining prestige, of 'playing the game' and of the utility of lethal militarism when called for and, like the vast majority of his peers, he held an absolute conviction in Britain's imperial entitlement. Although an unabashed advocate of the 'old-school' imperialism pursued by men like Clive and Gordon, Sykes did not envisage the Ottoman Empire as a site for conquest. Rather he saw it as a region where Britain could extend her influence informally by guiding the Turks towards modernisation. Although he disliked the ruling system (both Sultanate and Young Turk) and the ruling class, he admired the Anatolians who, like the

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> *The British Soldier and the Turk*, Ms., undated, HHC DDSY2/5/118.

<sup>34</sup> Mark Sykes, 27 November 1911, Hansard, HC Deb, 5th ser., vol.32, cc.104.

Anglo-Saxons, were a martial race sharing many common values and traditions. The preservation of the Ottoman Empire felt instinctively right to Sykes and accorded with prevailing British policy, not only the bolstering of the Empire as a buffer state between Russia and India, but also because, by taking the Muslim's cause, Britain was keeping Indian Muslims on side as well as forestalling trouble in Asiatic Turkey. Writing after the Second Balkan War, he criticised those who unthinkingly accepted Christian atrocities against Muslims but reacted oppositely in the event of Turkish atrocities against Christians: 'When Turkish irregulars ravage, burn, rape, or slay, no words are sufficient to reprobate the criminals or those responsible for their control, which is perfectly right and just; when Bulgarian irregulars do precisely the same thing we are only told to wonder that they do no more'.<sup>35</sup> It was vital, argued Sykes, that European powers act evenhandedly otherwise tales would soon spread to Asiatic Turkey of atrocities committed by Christians against Muslims under the eyes of the great powers and a belief would arise that 'the extermination of Islam is the avowed policy of Christendom'.<sup>36</sup> This in turn would lead to a revival of that deepest of British fears, the scourge of fanaticism, and hence a fresh crisis for the West.

### ***3.2 War: 1914 - May 1916***

Initially, Sykes joined his regiment but in early 1915 Kitchener asked him to be his personal representative on an inter-departmental committee set up to consider the future of Asiatic Turkey.<sup>37</sup> Sykes then became an officer of the General Staff of the War Office. Besides its Chairman, Maurice De Bunsen, the Committee consisted of various representatives from governmental departments with an interest in British policy towards the Ottoman Empire, such as the Foreign Office

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<sup>35</sup> *The Times*, 'Macedonian Atrocities', 25 February 1913.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Sykes had been introduced by Lancelot Oliphant of the Foreign Office to Kitchener's personal military secretary, Col. O.A.G. Fitzgerald, to whom he began giving his views on Eastern affairs for Kitchener's benefit. It was on this basis that Kitchener called for Sykes to represent him on the Bunsen Committee. See Kedourie, 'Sir Mark Sykes and Palestine, 1915-16' in *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol.6, No.3, Oct 1970, pp.340-345, p.340.

and the India Office. The Committee was briefed with considering what Britain's objectives should be in the Middle East and with determining a strategy for achieving them. It concluded in 'vague and idealistic' terms that the optimal outcome for Britain, bearing in mind the need to take into account the interests of France and Russia, would be the maintenance of the Ottoman Empire in its Anatolian heartland but the devolution of its non-Turkish provinces – Armenia, Syria, Palestine and Iraq.<sup>38</sup> Outside of Anatolia, the remaining provinces would become more autonomous and benefit from Western influence (but not control) without referral to Constantinople. Before pursuing such a policy, the government tasked Sykes with making an informal visit to the Dardanelles, Egypt and Mesopotamia to gauge reactions to the Committee's findings and to gather intelligence on the military situation. During his travels he was to report back regularly to Charles Callwell at the War Office. This period, June 1915 to December 1915, arguably marked the high point of Sykes's career as an Eastern expert. He had become the government's representative in the field, with authority to go to all outposts of the British Empire in the East to discuss and develop policy. It was he, and he alone, who was tasked with ascertaining what was best for the Empire in relation to the Middle East, and bringing back the information he deemed most relevant to the War Cabinet. Even before he left, he was advising the War Office and the Foreign Office on aspects of Islam and the Ottoman Empire better left to specialists. Reflecting the fact that King Hussein, Sherif of Mecca and second in his religious authority only to the sultan in his role as caliph, was already being mooted as a spiritual alternative,<sup>39</sup> he produced a note in May 1915 for the Foreign Office, advising them on the historical and theological meaning and significance of the caliphate in which, for example, he sweepingly asserted that for 'Sunnis the Caliphate is only a detail and not an

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<sup>38</sup> Briton Cooper Busch, *Britain, India and the Arabs, 1914-1921* (Berkeley, CA, 1971), p.48.

<sup>39</sup> The 1916 Arab rising can be traced to contacts originally established between the British and the Sherif in early 1914 when King Hussein's son, Abdullah, approached Kitchener.



essential of Islam', a statement that would surely have surprised (and appalled) the Delhi administration.<sup>40</sup>

Cairo was also considering the Sherif's position. As Donald Bloxham has put it, promotion of the Arab cause was conceivably 'a mirror image of the German-Ottoman sponsorship of jihad in British and Russian dominions', and, just as the Central Powers sought to undermine Britain by stimulating anti-imperial insurgency, so the British saw an opportunity to undermine Ottoman prestige and pan-Islamism by playing on ethnic Arab nationalism.<sup>41</sup> When Sykes arrived there in August, Bertie Clayton was quick to give him a note from a 'reliable informant' which described Hussein as 'well-educated' and 'of exceptional ability in religious matters and Mohammedan literature' as well as 'very generous, kind-hearted and liberal'.<sup>42</sup> According to the informant the Sherif had the support and respect of Arabs in the region. He knew the British to be 'just and highly civilized. And he likes them. No doubt he has come in contact with them during his stay in Constantinople and learnt a good deal from them about modern civilization and justice'.<sup>43</sup> Whilst little, if anything, was expected of the Sherif and his supporters militarily, it was hoped that Arab support of the Allied cause would prevent them taking Turkey's side and preclude 'all possibility of [the Central Powers] being able to raise against [Britain], and against the French and Italians, a genuine Jihad, engineered from the Holy Places of Islam'.<sup>44</sup> Those in Cairo knew there would need to be a carrot to gain Sherifian support but were pragmatic about giving Hussein vague assurances of Arab independence. Dissension amidst the Arab tribes meant, in the view of most with experience of the region, that the future establishment of a strong united Arab state was not

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<sup>40</sup> Note to the Foreign Office on the Caliphate by Mark Sykes, May 1915, HHC DDSY2/4/85.

<sup>41</sup> Bloxham, p.135.

<sup>42</sup> Attachment to a letter from Clayton to Sykes, 5 August 1915, HHC DDSY2/4/88.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Clayton to Parker, 13 December 1915, HHC DDSY2/11/10.

merely unlikely, but an ‘absurdity’.<sup>45</sup> As Clayton cynically put it, a ‘native governed state’ would ‘ensure what would practically be complete control’ so why hold out for ‘complete annexation’?<sup>46</sup>

No longer advocating the Turkish cause, Sykes was taken with the idea of helping the Arabs and the other minority groups of Asiatic Turkey which he could see had strategic and propagandist potential. Another attraction to a man like Sykes was the promise of romance and adventure in a region that was one of the few untamed places left in the world. Brought up on a fictional diet that included biblical and classical allusions, the Crusades and juvenile adventure fiction, Sykes and his peers were drawn to the imperial heroes of Britain’s past and ‘Arabia offered a reassuring continuation of the glories of nineteenth-century imperial exploitation’.<sup>47</sup> Whereas pursuing the Arab cause gave Sykes an opportunity to indulge his yen for Eastern romance and adventure, when he continued his journey to India he found it just too alien, and its imperial life too bureaucratic. Constantinople was, in his opinion, much more developed than Delhi and even allowing for India being ‘poor, overpopulated and understaffed’ Sykes could see why Indian Muslims who had been to Constantinople were so impressed for there they saw ‘something externally more efficient than they see at home’.<sup>48</sup> In his opinion, it would be wrong to impose Indian rule upon the Middle East as it shared much greater affinity with Egypt and he warned that it would be a great ‘mishap’ if ‘any action of ours should do anything to impose artificially an alien and lower grade of civilisation upon a people who have a natural tendency to a higher and more progressive social state’.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Busch, p.91, citing a letter from Nicolson to Hardinge, 16 December 1915.

<sup>46</sup> Clayton to Parker, 13 December 1915, HHC DDSY2/11/10.

<sup>47</sup> Satia, p.71.

<sup>48</sup> Leslie, p.247, citing a letter from Sykes to his wife, 9 September 1915.

<sup>49</sup> Memorandum on the Military and Political Situation in Mesopotamia, 28 October 1915, HHC DDSY2/4/93.

The problem with India, argued Sykes, was not only the 'lower grade civilisation' but the failings of the Indian administration. Despite his almost absolute lack of knowledge about the political situation in India, he penned a memo to the War Cabinet informing them that the administration's attitude was one of 'apology, of fear, of nervous consideration' towards the country's Muslim population and revealed a lack of education regarding the realities of Islamic theological doctrine and of the political situation in Constantinople.<sup>50</sup> According to Sykes, Indian Muslims only supported the caliphate out of ignorance. For example, some believed that 'Constantinople is the ancient capital of Islam – [an idea] which not the rudest Anatolian peasant would entertain'.<sup>51</sup> If British civil servants and officers were properly educated they would know that Muslims in India were merely 'the unwitting dupes of cosmopolitan knaves of the CUP who believe neither in Allah nor the Koran', and 'they would be heartened and stiffened by a sense of right which is at present lacking'.<sup>52</sup>

In Sykes's view, the Indian government's concerns about Islamic fanaticism in India amounted to nothing more than scaremongering. Credit should be given to Indian Muslims, that they would, if informed properly, understand the realities of the political situation and CUP efforts to exploit Islam for political ends. Instead, it was Indians with a European education who posed a threat:

An 'Intellectual' with an imitation European training, with envy of the European surging in his heart, who is agnostic and has no belief whatever in religion, but sees in Islam a political engine whereby immense masses of men can be moved to riot and disorder, is far more dangerous.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

In other words, Sykes argued that it was cynical exploiters of Islam, in Turkey and India, not honest Muslims, who were to be feared. His advice was to counter the ‘Intellectuals’ and thereby prevent fanatical uprisings.

As part of his journey Sykes visited Kut where British and Indian troops had recently secured a victory (and before their ignominious surrender in April 1916). He reported back to Callwell and also wrote a lengthy article for *The Observer*, published on 21 November 1915, extracts of which were subsequently cited in other papers including *The Times* and *The Daily News*. Sykes’s article was long and evocative. It set out in detail the terrain of southern Mesopotamia, the people he encountered, the nature of the troops, the effect of British victory. It was an excellent propagandist piece, not only in support of the British war effort but also in support of British imperialism. In accordance with the themes of the early years of the war he emphasised how Britain, unlike Germany, was fighting for peace and civilisation:

Let it be said in days to come that even as in the west so in the middle East our soldiers British and Indian fought watched and suffered in the cause of peace and civilization while our enemies sought to ferment mutiny and religious hate in a neutral land, not to fulfil or achieve a reasonable purpose to ensure victory or facilitate their operations, but merely to wreak vengeance and to satisfy their spite [sic].<sup>54</sup>

He emphasised the scale of the victory and the bravery of the troops. Whilst the Indian soldiers had fought valiantly beside the British, there was no question as to who was master and who servant:

If the British soldier leads the sepoy has not been slow to follow, and to see the wounded Indian soldier stiffen himself on his stretcher and sit up to salute an unknown British officer gives one glimpse of that spirit of loyalty, pride and glory

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<sup>54</sup> Ms. for *The Observer* article, HHC DDSY2/4/12.

in the profession of arms that no intrigues can dispel and years of patient justice and devotion of forgotten generations of Englishmen has evoked.<sup>55</sup>

The British soldier, 'the first gentleman in Europe or Asia', had conducted himself valiantly but Sykes also praised the Turkish soldiers. As with Gallipoli, British success was measured on one level by comparison with the quality of the opposition, and the Turks had 'fought as stubbornly as men could'.<sup>56</sup> Sykes listed the endearing qualities of the Anatolians who were loved for 'their patience, good nature, gentle humour, affection for children and animals', and 'no one who has fought them regards them with ought but respect'. Whilst the local Arabs were 'cruel, treacherous and rascally', Sykes claimed that underneath the moral decay brought on by centuries of ill-treatment, 'the Arab fires of intellect, poetry and wit survive'.<sup>57</sup> Finally, he highlighted the benefits of British occupation and drew upon all the stock elements of successful British imperialism, in particular, efficient government, justice and free trade. Describing how law and order were established within an hour of the British moving into Kut he noted that 'Policemen were patrolling the dirty little streets – a governor was established in an office – tired troops were standing in the sun while billets were sought for them'.<sup>58</sup> Meanwhile, 'the bazaar does not close, the coffee shop is thronged, the women do not pause in their work by the waterside ...'.<sup>59</sup> It is instructive to compare this article with the Baghdad Proclamation he drafted in 1917 (considered in the next section) and to note that there is no mention of liberation or self-determination for the oppressed inhabitants of Kut. Rather, Sykes congratulated the British troops on stepping smoothly into Ottoman shoes, but replacing their oppressive regime with a just

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

and efficient administration, the British motto being 'Carry on' rather than the destructiveness of *Kultur*.<sup>60</sup>

At around the same time as Sykes was writing for *The Observer*, his book, *The Caliphs' Last Heritage*, an 'acknowledged publishing sensation', was published by Macmillan.<sup>61</sup> The book was split into two sections. The first was a short history of Ottoman Asia, and the second contained diary observations gleaned during his various journeys through the Ottoman Empire. The topicality and contemporary significance of the book is evidenced by the intense attention it received from the press. Sykes and his publishers collected over fifty reviews of the book from a variety of publications ranging from *Country Life*, to *The Spectator*, to regional newspapers such as the *Yorkshire Post* and *The Manchester Guardian*, and scholarly journals such as the *Asiatic Review* and the *Near East*.<sup>62</sup> Some were critical of the book but virtually all comment (some cynically perhaps) on its timely and opportune publishing. There can be no doubt that serious academics continued to take his writing with a pinch of salt. *The Athenæum* wryly observed that 'Sir Mark's way is not to mince his words or hide his opinions, which are always unmitigated, and often rather violently expressed' and noted that the historical section of the book did not require 'serious criticism' because it was simply a 'sketch of the history of the lands' bearing 'no signs of a study of any but the ordinary popular sources'.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, *The Guardian* started its review by commenting that 'the author, we are informed, is now on active service, and this must be accepted as an explanation and apology for the marked ill-construction of the published work'.<sup>64</sup> *The Times Literary Supplement* was also scathing of the historical section which it considered neither

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Satia, p.61.

<sup>62</sup> The collection of press cuttings is at HHC DDSY2/6/2.

<sup>63</sup> *The Athenæum*, No. 4595, 20 November 1915 p.359. Sykes took issue with the assertion that he had only consulted popular sources.

<sup>64</sup> *The Guardian*, 30 December 1915.

original nor up to date with current scholarship. 'In itself, it possesses no authority, and therefore forms a somewhat incongruous contrast to the evidence of the diaries, which have all the authority of a direct witness'.<sup>65</sup> As this latter comment indicates, whereas the first section was viewed more as a potted history than a serious work of scholarship, even academics struggled to quibble with the force of Sykes's first-hand accounts contained in the diarized section. Accordingly, the *Saturday Review* stated 'few living Englishmen can have had such varied first-hand experience of the Turkish Empire as the author of this book, and few can be better qualified to answer that endlessly repeated question: "What is to become of the Turk?"' and the *Contemporary Review* earnestly commended 'these important accounts of lands so far off from current knowledge as Mesopotamia and the wilds of Kurdistan. The work is one of real value'.<sup>66</sup> The less scholarly reviews tended to praise both sections of Sykes's book, and the popular consensus was that it was a 'valuable contribution to our knowledge of the history of Turkey' and a book that in years to come was 'certain to take its place as a standard and monumental work'.<sup>67</sup>

The sheer number of reviews indicates the extent to which Sykes was already considered a leading authority on the subject and also the scope of public interest in the region. The most frequently cited extract was Sykes's exhortation, in his customary florid and sweeping style, to 'wipe John Stuart Mill, Omar Khayyam, Burke, Ruskin, Carlyle and Bernard Shaw out of your mind; learn the book of Job by heart for philosophy, the book of Judges for politics, the "Arabian Nights" (Burton's translation) for ethics; ride by balance, not by grip, keep your girths loose'. Sykes was arguing, self-interestedly, that the constrained, regulated and narrow empiricism of the modern Western epistemological system was no good when it came to the East and only a freer, more intuitive approach would

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<sup>65</sup> *The Times Literary Supplement*, 18 November 1915.

<sup>66</sup> *Saturday Review*, 27 November 1915; *Contemporary Review*, December 1915.

<sup>67</sup> *The Illustrated London News*, 27 November 1915.

enable insight and understanding. For the reviewers, this extract was no doubt attractive not only because it emphasised the profound differences between East and West, but also because it characterised the romantic and imaginary potential of the region as elucidated in Sykes's book.

Another frequently cited extract was Sykes's assertion that 'there is nothing in our daily private or public life to-day which is not directly or indirectly influenced by some human movement that took place in this zone' and the critics and journalists readily agreed about the region's historic significance. They were also interested in Sykes's descriptions of the diversity of the Empire and his assertion that there was no such place as Turkey and no such people as the Turks. Instead there was a Turkish ruling dynasty and a Turkish language that was the official language of a land mass made up of Muslims, Christians, Jews and Pagans, where languages included Kurdish, Armenian, Greek, Chaldean and Arabic. This perceived lack of homogeneity was to prove useful as the war progressed as a ground for justifying the breakup of the Empire, but in late 1915 it was relayed in more neutral terms as a means of illuminating Germany's ally in the war. Indeed, there remained a startling lack of vitriol towards the Turks. It was still acceptable for Sykes to be described as a 'candid and warm-hearted Turcophile' and his evenhandedness towards the Islamic faith was met with approval.<sup>68</sup> As the *Birmingham Daily Post*'s critic noted, Sykes's account of Mohammed and Mohammedanism was 'fair' and 'showed true insight'.<sup>69</sup> Some even commended Muslims at the expense of Europeans reflecting Sykes's concerns regarding the degeneration of Western civilisation and the relative merits of traditional Islamic society:

Faults in the Mohammedan body are not difficult to find; but this at least may be said, that in no part of the world does there exist a large Mohammedan society in

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<sup>68</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, 17 November 1915.

<sup>69</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post*, 12 September 1915.



which men are cruel to those whom they employ, indifferent to their parents, systematically dishonest to one another, or socially oppressive to the poor – all of which odious vices are practised as common customs in the land whence come those persons who sally forth to regenerate the East.<sup>70</sup>

The future of the Ottoman Empire was evidently not a fait accompli. The lack of anything more than cursory criticism of Turkish imperial rule reflected a continued receptiveness towards the Ottomans although a number of reviewers highlighted Sykes's dismissal of the CUP and cited his eminently quoteworthy description of them as 'addle-pated robbers and blundering cranks'. No doubt with an element of patriotic morale boosting in mind – taking into account ongoing failures in the Dardanelles – several reviews highlighted Sykes's observation that since the onset of the CUP's administration, there was a lack of 'hope and vitality' in Constantinople. Notably, only marginal coverage was given to his strongly worded views on the Armenian population despite the events of the preceding summer. Whilst not condoning the massacres, a number of critics commented favourably on how Sykes's prejudice against Armenians could assist the public in understanding why the Turks had committed the atrocities. Accordingly, an article in *The Globe* considered that Sykes's views on the Armenians could 'help to explain the ferocity with which the Turks are now endeavouring to exterminate the race'.<sup>71</sup> The *Birmingham Daily Post* posed the question, 'What is it in the Armenian which revolts Turk and Western European alike?' and concluded that although he was a fellow Christian, the Armenian was nevertheless 'a degenerate of the human race'.<sup>72</sup>

As mentioned above, Sykes is sometimes dismissed in the historiography of the Middle East as a lightweight, a romantic, who, as one prescient contemporary

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<sup>70</sup> *Yorkshire Post*, 24 November 1915.

<sup>71</sup> *The Globe*, 30 October 1915.

<sup>72</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post*, 12 September 1915.

critic observed, valued what he saw in the East for 'its strangeness or antiquity'.<sup>73</sup> Irrespective of whether this was the lens through which he viewed the East, the fact remains that, by the time he returned from his War Office mission in December 1915, the general consensus at home was that 'few living men can have seen more of the Ottoman Empire than Sir Mark, or could surpass him in clarity of view and phrase.'<sup>74</sup> Whilst he may not have been a scholar, his first hand experience – elucidated emphatically in both book and reviews – was considered to be of greater importance. His value as a mouthpiece for the communication of the Egyptian administration's military and strategic objectives had also been appreciated during his visit with the effect that, for Cairo too, he was an essential figure. As Clayton recognized, he was someone with 'a commanding personality whose views will carry weight with the Government'.<sup>75</sup> The combination of his role on the De Bunsen Committee, together with his War Office commissioned tour of the region, and the opportune publication of *The Caliphs' Last Heritage*, had resulted in Sykes becoming the foremost British authority on the Ottoman Empire and 'the only one with anything like a comprehensive picture' of current developments in the Empire's Asiatic provinces.<sup>76</sup> Accordingly, on 16 December he was called before the War Committee to give evidence on the Arab question and determine future British policy on it.

The transcript of the meeting indicates that Sykes answered questions from Asquith, Kitchener, Balfour and Lloyd George authoritatively and unequivocally, and not only on strategy but also on theological subjects such as Wahhabism and Shiism. He made the case for supporting the Sherif of Mecca (negotiations towards an alliance between the Sherif and Henry McMahon were already well

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<sup>73</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, 17 November 1915.

<sup>74</sup> *The Daily News Leader*, 13 December 1915.

<sup>75</sup> Clayton to Parker, 13 December 1915, HHC DDSY2/11/10.

<sup>76</sup> Busch, p.83.

underway) and stated that there was a strong desire in the region for an independent Arab state. He warned that failure to support the Sherif would likely lead to his death at the hands of the Turks as well as those of potentially pro-Allied Arab intellectuals and Arab army officers. To reinforce his case he raised the spectre of pan-Islamism, and played to the Committee's fears regarding India's safety, warning that without the Sherif 'we shall live to see Islam pretty solid; then we shall be confronted with the danger of a real Jihad'.<sup>77</sup> He advised the Committee not to worry about the effect on Indian Muslims of British support of the Arabs. The Indians would stay on side, he claimed, as long as the British did not become involved in 'religious squabbles which have to do with the Khalifate'.<sup>78</sup> And it would be wrong not to support the Arabs simply because the Indians had been influenced by CUP Propaganda: 'with regards to any Mohammedans who are our friends, as the Arabs wish to be, I think that we should back our friends. It is no use not backing our friends because people who have been influenced by our enemies dislike them'.<sup>79</sup> At the end of the meeting it was agreed that before the military situation could be progressed it was necessary to resolve the diplomatic position with the French. Sykes, a diplomatic neophyte, was given charge of this task and the eponymous Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 was the result.

Sykes had also given the Committee a Memorandum dated 28 October 1915 which set out his detailed plan on strategy and propaganda in the Middle East. In it he explained that the Germans and Turks had sought to mobilise Islam against Great Britain and Russia by fomenting 'discontent and fanaticism' in India, Persia, Egypt and Arabia 'using highly efficient agents on a well co-ordinated

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<sup>77</sup> 'Evidence on the Arab Question' by Lt.Col. Sir Mark Sykes for the War Committee, 16 December 1915, p.4, HHC DDSY2/4/95.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p.3.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

plan'.<sup>80</sup> It was necessary for Britain to respond by forming her own definite policy and co-ordinated plan. This would involve supporting the Arabs and anti-CUP elements in the Empire and propagandising 'Islam in a definite and offensive manner, not making apology for our acts, but attacking the enemy on the score of injustice, crime, unorthodoxy, and hypocrisy, in our own Press, in the native Press, and by means of leaflets'.<sup>81</sup> Again, Sykes was arguing that worrying about the sensitivities of Indian Muslims was foolish and a more aggressive, unapologetic policy was called for. To organise the propaganda effort, he proposed setting up an Arab Bureau based in Cairo whose general purpose would be to produce an atmosphere 'favourable to us among Moslems generally, and to combat the propaganda, direct and indirect, of our enemies'.<sup>82</sup> Sykes envisaged assuming the role of head of the Arab Bureau himself but over Christmas 1915 it was decided that the archeologist and academic, David Hogarth, would take the role and Sykes would continue to lead diplomatic negotiations with the French.

In 1916 Sykes was occupied negotiating the division of the Middle East with his French counterpart François Georges-Picot whilst simultaneously working on the propaganda effort. As has been seen in Chapter Two, it was in early 1916 that Wellington House turned its attention to propaganda concerning Islamic countries, and Sykes's emphasis on the importance of this in his memoranda of late 1915 was undoubtedly a critical part of the galvanizing process. The evidence in Sykes's papers of direct communication with Wellington House illustrates the respect and authority he commanded. For example, the newly appointed Edward Long deferred to him in relation to matters such as the publication and effective distribution of *al-Haqīqah*, the nature and distribution

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<sup>80</sup> Memorandum for the War Committee, 28 October 1915, HHC DDSY2/4/93. His travels in Mesopotamia would have ensured he had firsthand experience of Ottoman propaganda. In Kut, for example, Indian troops were barraged with leaflets printed in Baghdad in Hindi and Urdu, calling on them to abandon the 'army of disbelievers' and join their brothers in faith (see Rogan, p.232).

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

of information to Indian troops and the publication of pamphlets such as that containing the Sherif's proclamation of independence.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, when the India Office was mooting the possibility of developing *al-Haqīqah* with Wellington House in December 1915, it was to Sykes that Arthur Hirtzel immediately turned for advice. Sykes encouraged Hirtzel to proceed, telling him that 'I certainly think that this is a long felt want' but warning that it would require 'very careful handling and an expert staff'.<sup>84</sup> Similarly, when *El Kowkab* was implemented, Sykes was intimately involved, endorsing its publication and instructing Austen Chamberlain, Secretary of State for India, that 'instead of including it in the HAKIKAT it should circulate separately in accordance with Clayton's wish'.<sup>85</sup>

As highlighted in Chapter Two, one of the main target recipients of *al-Haqīqah* was 'actual or potential belligerents in the middle east', in other words, the Arabs. As spring 1916 passed, and Kut fell to the Turks, the importance of maintaining British prestige became ever more pressing. One of Sykes's collaborators in the production of propagandist material was his interpreter and 'Oriental Clerk', A.P. Albina. In April Albina produced an account of the fall of Kut and observed that whereas 'the withdrawal from the Dardanelles did not strike such a heavy blow to England's prestige in the East' the Arabs were shaken and bewildered by the British failure:

[T]o the Arab it is inconceivable that, powerful England with her supremacy on the sea, her wealth, her guns and armaments, the means of transport at her disposal, her numberless troops, not only should not be able to defeat the Turkish army in Mesopotamia but that an English General should be humiliated by an unconditional surrender of himself and his army to the Turks.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> See, for example, Long to Sykes, 20 July 1916, HHC DDSY2/4/104. Also, Long to Sykes, 18 October 1916, HHC DDSY2/1/32/163 and Long to Sykes, 12 December 1916, HHC DDSY2/1/33/222 (not contained on BL microfilm and obtained directly from HHC).

<sup>84</sup> Sykes to Hirtzel, undated ms. note on back of letter from Gowers to Hirtzel, 15 December 1915, BL IO L/PS/10/581/466.

<sup>85</sup> Sykes to Chamberlain, 3 October 1916, BL IO L/PS/11/110.

<sup>86</sup> Report by AP Albina, April 1916, HHC DDSY2/4/100.

This led Sykes to declare, dramatically, that as a consequence of being ‘humiliated and defeated by Asiatics as we have been in this war, prestige is a thing of the past, the last name has gone in Lord Kitchener’ thereby reinforcing his case for unapologetic propaganda.<sup>87</sup>

As well as using propaganda to keep the Arabs pro-Entente, Sykes saw a burgeoning need to correct the negative stereotyping of Arabs in Britain and in neutral countries and to ensure the world saw them as a people who wanted, and deserved, Western help. An article, ostensibly by Albina, dated June 1916 (the month in which the Arab Revolt was launched), entitled ‘The Future of the Arab Race’, like the Syria pamphlet, reflects a transitional period in British propaganda efforts regarding the Arabs and bears the hallmarks of input from Sykes (based on a similarity in style and motivation as well as his history of collaboration with Albina). ‘The Arabs,’ the writer explained,

have very often been described in books and articles published by occasional travellers as a decadent, greedy and lazy nation. This impression was gathered by superficial observation and not through deep and sound study of the true nature and character of the race. The real Arab is noble, intelligent, chivalrous and possesses many qualities that are apt to develop and improve under a just and beneficial rule.<sup>88</sup>

Although the Arabs were intelligent and chivalrous they were not yet ready for self-government argued the writer, who himself claimed to be an Arab (Albina hailed from Jerusalem but lived in Florence). Because of internal dissension between different religious groups, they needed an external arbiter who could ‘restore good will and union amongst the different creeds’.<sup>89</sup> Of course, the

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<sup>87</sup> Ms and Ts Memorandum by Sykes on the Military Situation in the Middle East, July 1916, HHC DDSY2/4/105.

<sup>88</sup> ‘The Future of the Arab Race’ by AP Albina, HHC DDSY2/4/102.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

writer argued that ‘a protectorate of England and France in their respective zones of influence’ would be the best solution as only ‘under the tutorship of a just and strong nation can [the region] effect its regeneration’.<sup>90</sup> A German protectorship would not do, argued the writer, as the Arabs hated the Germans. Similarly, they were unwilling to remain under the tyrannical rule of the Turks, which had weighed upon them for centuries.

Sykes was able to constantly underscore his message to governmental circles when he took up responsibility for the production of a weekly *Arabian Report* for the War Committee (later the War Cabinet) that co-ordinated information gleaned from dispatches from the East as well as summarising relevant aspects of the Cairo production, the *Arab Bulletin*.<sup>91</sup> According to Shane Leslie’s biography of Sykes, his appraisals in these reports made him ‘the driving force of the Arabian policy of the Government, and the *Arabian Report* was the medium through which that force was mainly exercised during the most critical period in Near Eastern affairs’.<sup>92</sup> Sykes’s contacts in public and political life gave him even greater reach in conveying his message and, as a letter from Bertie Clayton to Sykes, dated 11 August 1916, indicates, those in Cairo continued to see Sykes as a mouthpiece for transmitting their views to relevant parties at home. Thus, when Clayton objected to *The Times* publishing ‘the most dreadful nonsensical stuff’ about Turkey it was to Sykes that he turned and asked to speak to Wickham Steed, the paper’s influential foreign correspondent, about the matter.<sup>93</sup> After Sykes’s death in 1919, DG Hogarth wrote a shrewd letter to Shane Leslie setting out his impressions of the man. In an extract that Leslie tellingly chose not to use in his book, Hogarth described Sykes as being of greatest use to the causes that he adopted in London:

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Later in the war it became the *Eastern Report* which covered Russia and the Balkans as well as the Muslim world.

<sup>92</sup> Leslie, p.24.

<sup>93</sup> Clayton to Sykes, 11 August 1916, HHC DDSY2/4/106.

[T]here he was an invaluable champion. Social position and parliamentary reputation reinforced courage and patent singleness of purpose, and he would prophesy bitter things in any company. Men, whose knowledge of the East was far deeper and wider than his, prompted him and put up their ideas through him, knowing that the politician and brilliant amateur would get a hearing.<sup>94</sup>

Sykes had proved a receptive mouthpiece following his 1915 visit to the region and in 1916 he wielded the power that men like Hogarth and Clayton had recognised to put the vision into effect, not only diplomatically, but for public consumption too.<sup>95</sup>

### ***3.3 War: After Sykes-Picot***

The ‘shamelessly self-interested’ Secret Inter-Allied (Sykes-Picot) Agreement was completed on 16 May 1916.<sup>96</sup> Its foundations lay in what the protagonists considered to be the historical rights of each party in the region and was, in essence, a deal designed to address issues between France and Britain, reflecting tensions between them in Europe not in the Middle East. The French claimed an ancient entitlement to Syria dating from the Crusades, whereas India gave the British an obvious right to Southern Mesopotamia. In light of these claims, Sykes and Georges-Picot agreed two areas (Red and Blue) where they planned to take direct control and two areas (A and B) in between the Red and Blue zones where they acknowledged Arab rights but planned to exert influence. What was intended by the latter aspect was open to interpretation although, certainly, when they were negotiating the Agreement, Sykes and Georges-Picot had no concept of that region as consisting of a burgeoning Arab ‘nation’, ‘only requiring the

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<sup>94</sup> ‘Recollections of Mark Sykes’ by DG Hogarth, undated, HHC DDSY2/10/16.

<sup>95</sup> Sykes’s persuasiveness in face to face situations was an incredibly potent weapon in his armory, as evidenced by the support he was able to garner for an ‘Arab Legion’ in 1917 despite deep opposition. See Busch, p.176-7.

<sup>96</sup> Barr, p.32.



removal of the Turk, the advice of a mandatory and a little time to enable them to stand alone'.<sup>97</sup> As Balfour subsequently put it, 'it never occurred to them that they had to deal at all with nations in the modern and Western sense of the term. With the Arab race, Arab culture, and Arab social and religious organisation (to say nothing of Jews, Maronites, Druses and Kurds) they knew they had to deal. But this was a very different thing'.<sup>98</sup>

With hindsight, Balfour provided a useful description of what was likely envisaged:

What its authors aimed at was the creation of two clearly-defined areas, one carved out of Syria and the other out of Mesopotamia – the first which should be French, as Tunis is French, the other English, as Egypt is English. Between them was to lie a huge tract occupied in part by nomad Bedouins, in part by a sedentary Arab-speaking population, urban and agricultural, who should be independent in the sense that they would live their own life in their own way, but who would be under the patronage, and for certain purposes under the control, either of France or of England, according as they belonged to what in the agreement was described as area A or area B.<sup>99</sup>

Sykes was pleased with the outcome as the French compromised on the amount of territory they wanted and agreed to the notion of an 'Arab State or a Confederation of Arab States' under the titular leadership of an 'Arab Chief'. They also agreed to international protection for the Holy Places and allowed for a British strategic link in Palestine with Mesopotamia – via the ports of Haifa and Acre. Reaching agreement, Sykes considered, would bring certainty to Britain's future policy in the region as well as promoting a trust-based relationship with the French. 'Under a scheme either of spheres or partition we stand square with our Allies', Sykes had reasoned, 'with instruments we can adhere to, boundaries

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<sup>97</sup> Documents On British Policy Overseas Online – Memorandum by Mr. Balfour (Paris) respecting Syria, Palestine, and Mesopotamia [132187/2117/44A], 11 August 1919.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

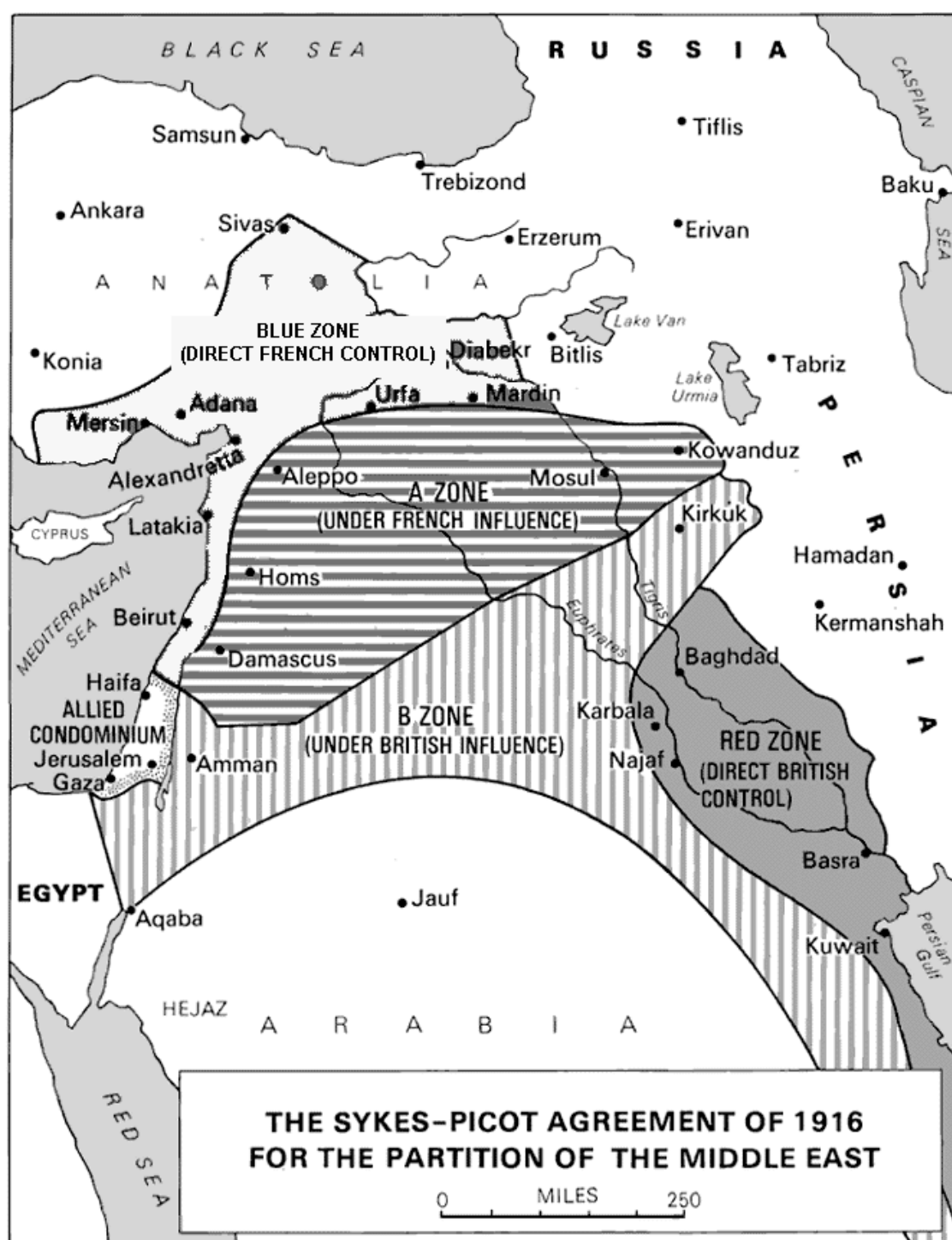
<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

we can see, and interests we can respect, and consequently shall be able to unite in a co-operative policy with permanent purpose and unanimity'.<sup>100</sup> His comments reflect not only the overriding concern with European events and relationships, but also reveal how in 1915 and 1916 it was still possible to unashamedly refer to the 'partitioning' of territory with regard solely to strategic and economic interests, and to negotiation with other Western powers without reference to the native population.<sup>101</sup> This was the language of aggressive, acquisitive, imperialism. However, ironically, the terms of the Agreement – in so far as they concerned Areas A and B – were simultaneously vague enough to leave open an interpretation that endorsed Arab independence and embraced the new Wilsonian notions of the later war years. Sykes was quick to grasp this ambiguity and use it to his advantage, as shall be seen below.

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<sup>100</sup> Note by Sykes on the proposed maintenance of of a Turkish Empire in Asia, 3 May 1915, HHC DDSY2/11/3.

<sup>101</sup> It was entirely in keeping with its predecessors, for example, the Constantinople Agreement of early 1915 when the Allies recognised Russian claims to Constantinople and the Straits.



Source: Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs ([www.passia.org](http://www.passia.org))

Sykes's enthusiastic pursuit of a policy that would extend territory over which Britain had direct control (the Red Zone) and indirect control (Area B) fell out of favour even as he was completing the Agreement, not because of its old-school imperial tenor but for more pragmatic reasons. As was evident from the findings of the De Bunsen Committee other governmental departments had little appetite

for adding to Britain's headaches by increasing her territorial possessions. As a government memorandum put it in July 1916, should Britain pursue any interests in Iraq they were to hold it 'not by Imperial right, but under concession from the Arabs'.<sup>102</sup> In addition, Delhi was not only ambivalent to supporting the Sherif but was strongly opposed to using Muslim Sepoys to support any military action undertaken by the Sherif in opposition to the caliphate (which could be construed as giving the conflict a religious dimension in a context where it was understood that India's Muslim soldiers' loyalty to Britain was purely secular). Sykes had offended the Indian administration (which he described privately as 'an anaemic giant with a head like a pea') with his tactless dismissal of their capacity to take charge of any future administration in the Middle East and his critical comments on what he considered their pandering to Indian Muslim opinion.<sup>103</sup> He had also antagonized the Egyptian administration which he thought lacked vigour and enthusiasm for the war effort.<sup>104</sup>

In diplomatic circles, the Agreement was met with apprehension not least because it tied Britain to an arrangement with their traditional imperial rival, the French. Memories of Fashoda remained strong, particularly in Egypt, and those on the ground in the Middle East were well aware that France's imperial ambitions and perceived draconian colonial practices were frequently at odds with those of Britain. Others simply thought Sykes had made a bad bargain, for example, Lord Curzon, who in a meeting with Sykes 'strongly criticised the allocation of Alexandretta and contiguous spheres of Asia Minor to the French, and said that, in his opinion, the French had got much the best of the bargain'.<sup>105</sup> A further complication arose when the Sherif's revolt went from hypothesis to reality on 5 June 1916 and the prospect of Britain actually being called to

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<sup>102</sup> Government Memorandum: 'The Sherif of Mecca and the Arab Movement', 1 July 1916, HHC DDSY2/11/14.

<sup>103</sup> Sykes to Hewett, 30 September 1916, HHC DDSY2/4/117.

<sup>104</sup> See Transcript of evidence of Sykes to War Committee, 6 July 1916, HHC DDSY2/11/15.

<sup>105</sup> War Cabinet Note, 3 April 1917, TNA CAB/24/9/306.

account for the promises she had made to the Sherif became a reality. The fact that the terms of the Agreement had been kept from him ensured that when they should emerge controversy was inevitable.

Sykes's position became a defensive one. He was a man who was singleminded in his pursuit of the ideas he believed in. Whilst this approach produced results, those results were compromised by his failure to take into account the nuances and complexities of the situation. As 1916 progressed, and the terms of the Agreement came under increasing scrutiny, his lack of experience also became more apparent. This did not result in him changing his position, indeed he continued to advocate passionately the Sherif's cause, and increasingly those of the Zionists and Armenians, but what he did – with alacrity – was to re-mould the language in which he communicated his message.<sup>106</sup> Aware that acquisitive imperialism was increasingly out of step with the wartime vernacular, he embraced the language of self-determination as a means of transforming British objectives into ones that accorded with Wilsonian ideals. The proclamation Sykes drafted on 5 March 1917 to be read out by Sir Stanley Maude on his entry into Baghdad, coming, as it did, shortly after Wilson's address to the Senate in January, is extremely instructive in this regard. Conscious of the 'wide publicity which [the Proclamation] will have in the Arabic speaking world', as well as the prospect of its publication in allied and neutral countries, Sykes was given responsibility for its careful drafting.<sup>107</sup> Calling on the Arabs of Baghdad to grasp the opportunity being offered to them by the Allies, he declared:

O people of Baghdad remember that for 26 generations you have suffered under strange tyrants who have ever endeavoured to set one Arab house against another

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<sup>106</sup> Sykes's interest in Zionism, despite his anti-Semitism, is evident from early 1916. Like many others he believed that harnessing Jewish support was critical to the Allied cause (Kedourie 'Sir Mark Sykes', p. 343).

<sup>107</sup> Telegram to Viceroy, Foreign Department, 12 March 1917, HHC DDSY2/4/138. Rogan asserts that the Baghdadis were never under any illusion as to the real purpose of British occupation despite the terms of Sykes's proclamation, but, of course, the Baghdadis were the least of British concerns (see Rogan, p. 326).

in order that they might profit by your dissensions. This policy is abhorrent to Great Britain and her Allies, for there can be neither peace nor prosperity where there is enmity and misgovernment. Therefore I am commanded to invite you, through your nobles and elders and representatives, to participate in the management of your civil affairs in collaboration with the political representatives of Great Britain who accompany the British Army, so that you may be united with your kinsmen in North, East, South, and West in realising the aspirations of your race.<sup>108</sup>

Sykes offered liberation and fulfilment in exchange for collaboration. In his original draft, he included the offer of ‘freedom to those who have proved themselves worthy to enjoy their own wealth and substance under their own institutions and laws’.<sup>109</sup> This time, however, Sykes was not left to his own devices. Already compromised in their dealings with the Sherif as a result of negotiations with the French, the British government was anxious not to be held hostage to fortune in Mesopotamia too. Austen Chamberlain warned that he was ‘uneasy about the wide terms of the promise conveyed’ and feared that ‘they may easily lead to charges of breach of faith in future, if circumstances render it impossible for us to give the complete freedom which they may be held to promise’.<sup>110</sup> As an alternative, Chamberlain proposed the insertion, ‘It is the desire of the British Government that the Arabs of Irak and Baghdad shall in future be free from oppression and enjoy their wealth and substance under institutions and laws congenial to them’.<sup>111</sup> In other words, the prospect of the Arabs being given discretion to determine their own institutions and laws was omitted.

Sykes raised vociferous objection. ‘The difference between the two paragraphs is this’, he argued, ‘the original paragraph, if properly translated, will mean “If

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<sup>108</sup> *The Proclamation of Baghdad* by Sir Stanley Maude, HHC DDSY2/4/138.

<sup>109</sup> Documents relating to the Baghdad Proclamation, HHC DDSY2/11/32. Emphasis added.

<sup>110</sup> Memorandum by Austen Chamberlain, 10 March 1917, HHC DDSY 2/11/32.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.* Emphasis added.

you support us you will be our equals in internal affairs which you will manage yourselves, if you do not we have a free hand” – The amendment means “Whether you behave well or ill we shall give you good treatment, but we shall settle your affairs for you”.<sup>112</sup> Again, Sykes saw in Chamberlain’s language a desire to govern the Middle East like India, an approach of which he strongly disapproved. ‘I am certain’, he declared, ‘if we take the line of trying to rule Arabs as we rule Indians we shall fail. We shall introduce the social colour distinction and antagonise the whole Arab movement; we shall have the intellectuals against us from the very start, and it is the intellectuals who will rule public opinion when peace comes’.<sup>113</sup> Unlike Indians, Sykes claimed, Arabs were proud and could not be treated ‘in the same spirit as one might approach tribesmen or natives who accept European superiority as a matter of course’.<sup>114</sup> He pointed out that the Turks had understood this and had ‘never denied the Arabs either social equality or executive power’.<sup>115</sup> By advocating local autonomy, he argued, Britain would achieve popularity and influence whilst losing little: ‘If we play our cards properly by means of “advisers” instead of “rulers” and back Arab nationalism, we shall have a permanent footing at little cost’.<sup>116</sup> Sykes believed that ostensible Arab rule with British guidance would in reality mean British control and he baldly, and naively, asserted that, were he in charge, he would ‘form a small committee of notables and members of the Arab Committee and then make them do as he wished’.<sup>117</sup>

Sykes considered that advocating autonomy for the Arabs of Mesopotamia would engender support and influence whilst also precluding discontent (perhaps he

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<sup>112</sup> Memorandum by Sykes, 10 March 1917, HHC DDSY2/11/32.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Minutes of the Mesopotamian Administration Sub-Committee, 21 March 1917, HHC DDSY2/4/141.

also sought personal vindication for his betrayal of the Sherif's cause in the Sykes-Picot Agreement), but what he could not see were the risks associated with Britain setting it up as an ideal and then failing to deliver. It was evident to those without Sykes's blinkered perspective that neither the British nor Indian governments were yet able to make any decisions about the future administration. They could neither promise an Arab state nor specify their own post-war role. Although there was a reluctance to further extend direct rule, the option to annex at a future date had to be preserved. Arthur Hirtzel, of the India Office, cautioned that he did not share Sykes's 'optimism as regards the Arab race & the Arab State' and it was important to 'avoid uttering words which we may hereafter have to eat if the Arab State proves a failure. In that event we shall almost certainly have to annex Bagdad, & we ought not to tie our hands now'.<sup>118</sup> In the end, even Chamberlain's wording was not deemed sufficiently opaque and Sykes's phrase was replaced by a vague assurance that it was not the wish of the British Government to impose 'alien institutions' upon the people of Bagdad and an expression of hope 'that the aspirations of your philosophers and writers shall be realised and that once again the people of Bagdad shall flourish, enjoying their wealth and substance under institutions which are in consonance with their sacred laws and their racial ideals'.<sup>119</sup>

The tenor of the Bagdad Proclamation was echoed in *The Commercial Future of Bagdad*, a pamphlet written shortly after the city's fall. The anonymous author made the now familiar point that British troops came 'not as conquerors or

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<sup>118</sup>Minute Paper by A. Hirtzel, 9 March 1917, BL IO L/PS/10/666/168.

<sup>119</sup> *The Proclamation of Bagdad* by Sir Stanley Maude, HHC DDSY2/4/138. According to Busch, Sykes's florid language was met with hilarity in Bagdad: 'Who were those "noble Arabs"? it was asked. "It's officialese for beastly Buddoos," explained Edmund Candler, the writer, who was "Eyewitness" with the Mesopotamian armies' (Busch, p.140). On the other hand, in London the press were impressed by what they saw as the writer's ability to connect to the 'native' mind. The *Daily Telegraph* praised its 'eloquence which appeals East of Suez and fires the imagination of lands that have a special and rhetorical culture of their own' (Extract from *Daily Telegraph*, 20 March 1917, BL IO L/PS/10/666/147).



enemies, but as liberators, who will help the people to restore their land'.<sup>120</sup> The pamphlet went on to quote Sykes, who assured the reader that:

There is no reason why Baghdad and other centres should not turn out just as good men in the professions and in commerce as the European countries. People were studying Plato in Baghdad in the eighth century. Turkey is the only nation which has not been a source of profit to the Arab, and that is because the Turk only looks for conquest.<sup>121</sup>

Sykes elucidated his new attitude towards the Arabs in an article in *The Times* on 30 March 1917 which can be read as a companion piece to his article of February dispelling the myth of the 'Clean Fighting Turk' (see Chapter Two) and which was, like the earlier article, disseminated widely by Wellington House.<sup>122</sup> In much the same way as other writers drew affinities between the Armenians and Europeans in order to elicit sympathy, so Sykes sought to emphasise that Arabs were not like 'natives' of Asia and Africa – a race to be ruled – rather they were a virile, physically superior, race, 'lithe and supple, of good physique', with 'perfect features, glossy hair, small hands and feet'.<sup>123</sup> What particularly distinguished them was their past greatness and this was emphasised repeatedly. Thus, Baghdad in the middle ages was a place of 'wits and poets, philosophers and statesmen, lexicographers, learned doctors and metaphysicians'.<sup>124</sup> The characteristics that had made Arab civilisation great were retained but suppressed in modern day Arabs because of centuries of contact with the destructive influence of the Turks. Their underlying intelligence and resourcefulness was apparent, argued Sykes, in the progress made by Arabs who had escaped the Turkish yoke, for example, Syrians who had emigrated to America and become

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<sup>120</sup> Anon., *The Commercial Future of Baghdad* (London, 1917), p.3.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p.7-8.

<sup>122</sup> See Renton, p.657.

<sup>123</sup> 'The Arab World: Its Past and its Future', *The Times*, 30 March 1917, p.7.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

‘doctors, lawyers, journalists, and merchants’.<sup>125</sup> Even at home, there was evidence of an Arab resurgence, ‘a movement towards cohesion, a new sense of being ... the desire to realize their destiny is a growing force’.<sup>126</sup> To assist the Arabs in achieving their potential did not warrant Western imperialism of the ‘white man’s burden’ denomination. Western involvement had to be more selfless than that; their role should be seen as a ‘contribution to the fulfilment of the destiny of mankind’. In other words, it was up to Western powers to work together to aid other races in their quest for autonomy and to prepare them for a world partnership where the ‘fruitfulness of the earth’ could be shared.

Some took Sykes’s rhetoric at face value and objected to what they perceived to be his unrealistic optimism regarding a burgeoning Arab movement. British diplomat, J.H. Monahan, wrote to Balfour (who in turn forwarded Monahan’s letter to Professor Ross, head of the newly established School of Oriental Languages) warning that there was no revivalist movement in Arabia either in literature, art or architecture and claiming that all historic traditions were ‘utterly extinct except the Moslem theological philosophy’ which was far from modern in its outlook as evidenced by the ‘excessive time spent in unintelligent learning of the Koran by heart’.<sup>127</sup> William Ormsby-Gore, Sykes’s assistant, reassured Sykes that, in his opinion, a resurgence in Arabic culture was evident. For example, journalism in Cairo and Mecca revealed a ‘progressive, virile and even literary use of the Arabic vernacular’ and the Koran was better at least than ‘any Turkish book – if there are such things’.<sup>128</sup>

Such a debate was irrelevant in the circumstances. Of course there were numerous Arab separatists – Iraqis, Egyptians and Syrians – working with, and without, the Sherif in pursuit of their own rights and interests (several of whom

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ormsby-Gore to Sykes, 12 July 1917, HHC DDSY2/11/56.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

had been executed by Cemal Pasha in 1915 and 1916) but, even if there had not been, it was incumbent upon Sykes to claim that a growing consciousness did exist. In the absence of a policy of outright control, Britain could only justify her involvement in the region on the basis of self-help irrespective of whether the Arabs themselves had articulated such a goal. In reality, Sykes's opinion was that for the population as a whole, 'having behind them centuries of Islamic tradition which knows politically neither colour, tongue nor frontiers', the concept of nationalism – the 'fundamental notion which runs through all European teaching, which somehow connects past glories and wrongs with a real or imaginary combination of language and blood' – was an alien one.<sup>129</sup> To apply it to Islamic societies meant 'a misty idea of a vague Caliphate vaguely ruling over a number of confederations of Moslems who form the dominant political force in the region they inhabit'.<sup>130</sup> It was to this perceived 'misty idea' that Sykes sought to appeal in the Middle East, although what he wished to inculcate, in due course, was a belief in secular nationalism, which he, like all Whitehall policy makers, considered inherently beneficial, with the result that 'each Moslem nation will be more interested in developing itself politically and commercially' than in promoting Islamic unity.<sup>131</sup> In theory, this would staunch the danger of pan-Islamism although an inherent risk remained of religious consciousness continuing to be a unifying factor and hence a drive towards nationalism could reinforce pan-Islamism rather than weaken it. This prospect was something which Sykes continued to flag as a possibility that could be avoided by unwavering British support of the Arab cause.

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<sup>129</sup> Sykes to Callwell, 2 August 1915, HHC DDSY2/4/97.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid. Sykes's synopsis is not dissimilar from Toynbee's analysis of Pan-Islamism in his work on Pan-Turanianism – see Chapter Two. In Toynbee's opinion, Pan-Islamism was a political movement not a religious one whereby Muslims were inspired by the example of the caliphate to seek an independent Muslim State 'powerful enough to make [its] wishes felt by the other sovereign states of the world' (Memorandum on the Pan-Turanian Movement by Arnold Toynbee, October 1917, FO 395/139/226240).

<sup>131</sup> Memorandum on British Policy in East Africa, 25 July 1917, HHC DDSY2/4/152.

It was important that a movement towards self-determination appear to be ignited from within not only to justify Britain's involvement. If the Sherif's revolt could be seen as a 'spontaneous and inevitable act' it could be argued that it was in response to Ottoman oppression, 'the result of the Turks and Germans endeavouring to suppress the Arab language and trying to shackle Islam to their military car'.<sup>132</sup> Further, in order to safeguard the support of Indian Muslims it was vital that Britain should not be seen to be dictating religious issues relating to the caliphate and the safeguarding of the Holy Places. With these considerations in mind, shortly after the publication of Sykes's article in *The Times*, he and Edward Long, of Wellington House, produced a pamphlet containing Sherif Hussein's proclamation of Arab independence, in which he took the title of King of Hedjaz, and proclaimed the Arab peoples' 'ancient and inviolable religious, territorial, and national rights against impious foreign aggression' (the pamphlet also contained the Baghdad Proclamation).<sup>133</sup> Emphasis was placed on the impiety of Turkey to underline that, rather than rising up in revolt against the only Muslim great power as acolyte of the Allies, the Arab movement was self-instigated, in opposition to the atheist Young Turks' control of the region, and with the objective of achieving freedom for their race. For the remainder of the war, the propagandists continued to emphasise the Arab movement as one motivated from within, for example, in relation to attempts by Sykes to establish an Arab Legion, and the involvement of Sherifian troops in key battles, such as the fall of Damascus in October 1918. With similar motivation, Sykes designed an Arab national flag, coloured black, green, white and red, to represent the unity of the great Arab dynasties and emblematic of their shared aspiration of a new nationalist future.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Sykes to Hewett, 30 September 1916, HHC DDSY2/4/117.

<sup>133</sup> Anon., *The King of Hedjaz and Arab Independence* (London, 1917), p.5. For Sykes's and Long's collaboration on the pamphlet see Long to Sykes, 30 March 1917, HHC DDSY2/1/35/158 (not on BL microfilm). The proclamation had originally been produced and distributed in the Middle East by the Arab Bureau in 1916 (Report on Moslem Propaganda, 11 February 1917, BL IO L/PS/11/110).

<sup>134</sup> See Leslie, p.280.

Whilst Sykes's propaganda was in keeping with Britain's 1917 agenda, the agreement he had made with Georges-Picot remained out of kilter. In Cairo men such as Reginald Wingate (the High Commissioner) and Hogarth openly called for its renegotiation. Sykes sought to distance himself from it by referring to it as the 'Anglo-Franco-Russian Agreement' and the 'Asia Minor Agreement'. In a memo dated 18 July he asked that it 'should be called the Anglo-French Arab agreement ... and not the Sykes-Picot Agreement'.<sup>135</sup> However, he continued to claim that it reflected the tenets of Britain's ongoing policy in the war and the region, namely, 'the unalterable friendship of Great Britain and France' and 'the duty of Great Britain and France towards oppressed peoples'.<sup>136</sup> In contrast, Hogarth and Wingate argued that America's entry into the war, the common anti-French feeling in the region and the fact that the Sherif 'was in no way minded to observe either the letter or the spirit of the Agreement' necessitated a reevaluation.<sup>137</sup> In a fit of pique, Sykes, who had met the Sherif in Jeddah in May 1917 in order to explain the broad terms of the Agreement to him, angrily retorted that he was 'tired of Englishmen who listen to a ridiculous Marmozet [sic.] like the King of Hejaz. The Arabs are weak and divided but manageable by any one who chooses to manage them, and very easily worked by people who prefer to mismanage them'.<sup>138</sup> Elsewhere, he dismissed them for their 'low standard of mental, moral, and physical activity, induced by generations of inbreeding' which he believed would preclude them from ever holding much weight in the 'councils of the world'.<sup>139</sup> Evidently, Sykes's attitude towards the Arabs had not changed as radically as the propaganda he produced would suggest. Indeed, these comments suggest that Sykes's only real political

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<sup>135</sup> Ms. memorandum by Sykes, 18 July 1917, HHC DDSY 2/4/151.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Note on the Anglo-French-Russian Agreement about the Near East by DG Hogarth, 10 July 1917, HHC DDSY2/4/150.

<sup>138</sup> Sykes's comments on a note by Hogarth, 10 July 1917, HHC DDSY2/4/150.

<sup>139</sup> Memorandum on British Policy in East Africa, 25 July 1917, HHC DDSY2/4/152.

commitment lay in the pursuit of British interests, wheresoever those interests lay.

In the summer of 1917 Sykes felt undermined and defensive but, with his customary bravura, he fought his corner which enabled him to write to Bertie Clayton that with ‘a few right and lefts, a breakfast with the PM and a successful speech in the House’ his opponents had been laid low ‘and I found myself myself again’.<sup>140</sup> Sykes covered his back by conceding that whilst the Sykes-Picot Agreement was fine at the time of its negotiation, it was no longer in keeping with the spirit of the times. He described it as an agreement of ‘an ancient Imperialist tendency’ and observed that whereas in 1915 it was acceptable to leave annexation open as a possibility, in late 1917 ‘the idea of annexation really must be dismissed’.<sup>141</sup> By early 1918 he too was arguing that the Agreement was obsolete. On 3 March, he wrote to Wingate that it was effectively ‘dead and gone, and the sooner scrapped the better’.<sup>142</sup> In his opinion, only via a peace conference, with the consent of both the governed and the world, could an agreement as to the tutelage of one people by another be determined. ‘Every Ministerial speech says as much, so why we don’t abandon the agreements I can’t imagine’.<sup>143</sup> Of course, the problem with abandoning the Agreement was the potential effect on Anglo-French relations. Sykes fully understood this and for so long as the Agreement remained current he sought to ameliorate its negative connotations by urging the French to revise their approach to imperialism in the same way as Britain was doing. In the view of Sykes and many others, the French were out of step with the new world order as their approach to colonisation was still to ‘Gallicise and annex’.<sup>144</sup> The British style

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<sup>140</sup> Sykes to Clayton, 22 July 1917, HHC DDSY2/11/61.

<sup>141</sup> Memorandum on the Asia Minor Agreement, 14 August 1917, HHC DDSY2/4/158.

<sup>142</sup> Sykes to Wingate, 3 March 1918, TNA FO 800/221/404.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Sykes to Barnes, 25 September 1917, HHC DDSY2/11/70.

was 'to rule the natives on their own lines, introducing as little British element as possible' and they were accordingly more in tune with current ideologies.<sup>145</sup> As late as September 1918, Sykes was entreating Georges-Picot to reconsider the French approach. Currently, he argued, 'Orientals' are of the view that 'Frenchmen work for the glory and benefit of France'.<sup>146</sup> It was imperative that they remould their image by stripping it of everything that was 'incompatible with a humane and idealistic settlement of the world'.<sup>147</sup>

Of course, key to Britain's new approach was her ostensible support of the rights of oppressed nationalities, not just the Arabs but Zionists, Kurds and Armenians, too. By pursuing these causes, argued Sykes, pan-Islamism could be neutered and India and Africa would be protected from the 'Turco-German combine'. If the argument regarding the political and strategic advantages failed, Sykes turned to the ideological, claiming in Parliament that whereas the object of the Germans was 'dominion', 'ours is liberation'.<sup>148</sup> Liberation was due to Ottoman minorities, to whom, he argued, 'we and the other Entente Powers have obligations and whose fate is bound up with the principle of nationality, the antidote to Prussian military domination'.<sup>149</sup> Nationalism had become, in the words of historian, James Renton, 'the redemptive force that was to take Western Asia back towards civilization'.<sup>150</sup>

Sykes's support of the Arab, Zionist and Armenian causes is apparent in the propaganda he prepared in anticipation of General Allenby's entry into Jerusalem on 11 December 1917. Sykes recognised that, like Maude's entry into Baghdad,

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Sykes to Georges-Picot, 16 September 1918, FO 800/221/371.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Mark Sykes, 12 July 1917, Hansard, HC Deb, 5th ser., vol.95, cc.2188.

<sup>149</sup> Sykes to Drummond, 20 July 1917, HHC DDSY2/11/60.

<sup>150</sup> Renton, p.653.

it offered an invaluable opportunity of ‘impressing on the public and the world in general’ the British message.<sup>151</sup> In a note entitled, ‘Points worth stressing on the British occupation of Jerusalem’, he was most eager to emphasise the British capacity for promoting good relations between different creeds and acting as impartial, fair, and humble arbiter; qualities which, Sykes argued, Christian, Muslim and Jew all recognised the British as possessing. In contrast, Turkish policy had been ‘to impoverish the Moslems, reduce the Christians to warring factions and force the Jews to pauperism’.<sup>152</sup> He took particular care to highlight British appreciation of Muslim sensitivities by indicating British knowledge of Islamic history and respect towards the religion and its followers. Drawing parallels between an earlier Muslim occupation of Jerusalem (as opposed to that of Christian crusaders), and Allenby’s, he made the following point:

When Omar the second Moslem Caliph took Jerusalem, the patriarch invited him to pray in the church of the Holy Sepulchre, the chivalrous Arab refused lest his people should in after times claim the church and prayed in the doorway instead of entering. The doorkeepers of the Church are still Moslems and in memory of Omar’s magnanimity General Allenby confirmed them in their office.<sup>153</sup>

Sykes’s message to the world, that a British presence was welcome to the oppressed minorities of the region, was subsequently reinforced in Wellington House pamphlets such as *The Freedom of Jerusalem* which described the joyful reaction of a wounded Arab officer of the Turkish Army on Allenby’s entry into the city. ‘That Arab officer, like the Syrians, the Armenians, the Jews, and the other nationalities under the Turkish Empire, was an alien subject of the most oppressive, corrupt, and degenerate government that holds power in the world’

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<sup>151</sup> ‘Points Worth Stressing on the British Occupation of Jerusalem’ by Sykes, 23 November 1917, HHC DDSY2/4/163.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.



and his reaction was typical, wrote Mathews, of Muslim men throughout the city.<sup>154</sup>

A British presence was preferable to that of the Turks, despite their shared religion because, as Sykes and others explained, whereas the British genuinely supported and respected Islam, the Germans and Turks cynically exploited it, in pursuance of their real pan-Turanian agenda. Indeed, according to novelist E.F. Benson in *Crescent and Iron Cross*, the Arabs posed a significant threat to the Turks and their planned 'Ottomanisation', as they numbered only one million less than their Turkish overlords (seven million as opposed to eight million). Accordingly, the CUP had stated that Arab Muslims were not of the true faith thereby releasing the Ottoman government from the prohibition in the Koran whereby Muslim cannot fight Muslim.<sup>155</sup> Similarly, Benson described how the Turks translated the Koran from Arabic to Turkish, despite the fact that this was forbidden by Islam, in order to pursue their policy of Ottomanisation. Other efforts were made to replace the Arabic language with Turkish but with limited success.<sup>156</sup> Turkish treatment of Arab soldiers in the Ottoman armies also indicated Turkish hatred of their fellow Muslims. Thus,

In spite of the need for troops one half of [the Baghdad Arab army corps] was sent from Bagdad to Erzerum in the depth of winter, without any provision of warm clothing. There, in those cold uplands, the men died at a rate of fifty to sixty a day. Their commanding officer was a Turk .... Though these troops had fought admirably, he openly called them Arab traitors, and his orders seem to have been merely to get rid of them. There were no courts-martial; they were just taken into a climate which killed them.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Mathews, p.5. Recent research indicates that in fact the majority of Arabs in the Ottoman officer corps stayed loyal (Mesut Uyar, 'Ottoman Arab Officers between Nationalism and Loyalty during the First World War', *War in History*, 20(4) (Nov 2013), 526-544).

<sup>155</sup> Benson, *Crescent and Iron Cross*, p.44.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., p.46.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., p. 136.

Benson quoted from the writings of a 'prominent nationalist', called Ahmed Sherif Bey, who wrote, 'it is the business of the Porte to make the Arabs forget their own language, and to impose upon them instead that of the nation that rules them'.<sup>158</sup> This, argued Benson, amounted to a 'definite statement of the Nationalists' hostility to all things Arab .... Even Moslems were but cattle for them, as also were Armenians and Greeks and Kurds'.<sup>159</sup> It also indicated that the Arabs had a dormant cultural heritage set to blossom once out of the control of the Turks, a heritage that Britain could help restore. In this vein, Sykes and others emphasised the gifts that ancient civilisations from the region had bestowed on the contemporary world. As the West languished in the Dark Ages, wrote Canon Parfit, 'Bagdad was the capital of a vast Mohammedan dominion; when Busrah and Kufa were rival centres of learning; when Arab scholars were the first teachers of algebra and chemistry; when the light of learning was kept aglow in the East while barbarian Huns desolated the lands of Europe'.<sup>160</sup> Parallels with Britain's position during the war were implicit. They too were holding the beacon of civilisation whilst the modern-day Hun desolated Europe and beyond.

Despite their historical greatness, immediate independence for the Arabs was not possible because of the years of being ground down by the Turks. 'A period of assistance, sponsorship, education and development must intervene before such peoples can hope to evolve stable and self-supporting institutions'.<sup>161</sup> Sykes was keen to point out that help from the Allied democracies would be in the form of a

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid., p.48.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid. Although it was incumbent upon the propagandists to emphasise Turkish hostility to all things Arab whether this was actually the case was, of course, a different matter. Toynbee warned in his paper on pan-Turanianism that Turkish persecution of Arabs was politically and not racially motivated, or else due to the problems of warfare, and that the CUP were prepared to make concessions to the Arabs with regards to their autonomy as an alternative to Western annexation to secure their support (*Memorandum on the Pan-Turanian Movement* by Arnold Toynbee, October 1917, TNA FO/395/139/226240). And, indeed, in December 1917 Cemal Pasha did attempt to persuade the Hashemites to return to the fold (Rogan, p.359).

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., p.9.

<sup>161</sup> Mark Sykes, *The Future of the Near East* (London, 1918), p.8.

trusteeship which should prevent any ‘danger of annexation, permanent protectorate, or monopolistic exploitation’.<sup>162</sup> After the Bolsheviks disclosed the terms of the Sykes-Picot Agreement in late November 1917, emphasising Britain’s benign intent became an even greater imperative. Cemal Pasha, the Ottoman commander in Syria, published the provisions in the Middle East and claimed that by working with the enemies of Islam the Sherif had ‘bartered the dignity conferred upon him by the Caliph of Islam for a state of enslavement to the British’.<sup>163</sup> The Foreign Office assured Hussein that they were only seeking to ‘stand by the Arab peoples in their struggle for the establishment of an Arab world in which law shall replace Ottoman injustice’.<sup>164</sup> T.E. Lawrence (whom Sykes had probably informed of the terms of the Sykes-Picot Agreement when they met in May) felt Sykes had betrayed the Arab cause in the interests of Anglo-French relations but Sykes told Clayton to tell him ‘that now he is a great man he must behave as such and be broad in his views’.<sup>165</sup> Arab independence would come in due course but a period of tutelage was necessary to avoid ‘poverty and chaos. Let him consider this as he hopes for the people he is fighting for’.<sup>166</sup>

Sykes’s support for the Arab, Armenian and Zionist causes became more fervent as the war drew to its close. He had, observed one of his contemporaries, a ‘thoroughly English compassion for the under-dog’, perhaps originating from his own status as a Roman Catholic in Anglican England.<sup>167</sup> But, in line with his overarching motivation, which was the furtherance of British interests, he also

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid., p.11.

<sup>163</sup> George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening, The Story of the Arab National Movement* (London, 1938), p. 256, citing speech given by Cemal Pasha in Beirut on 4 December 1917.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., p.432, translation of communication from the Acting British Agent, Jedda to King Hussein, 8 February 1918.

<sup>165</sup> Sykes to Clayton, 22 July 1917, HHC DDSY2/11/61.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Busch, p.70 – citing Arnold Wilson, *Loyalties, Mesopotamia, 1914-1917: A Personal and Historical Record*.

believed that if these causes were not pursued the situation would become ‘not only complicated but impossible to control’.<sup>168</sup> With his typically blinkered perspective, he seemingly thought that only a simple carve up of territory – a ‘quid pro quo’ whereby each ‘nation’ obtained land in exchange for supporting each other’s claim – was a feasible foundation for co-operation. His language became increasingly messianic, as he envisaged Jerusalem becoming a place where all three peoples could find their spiritual home. ‘If you look at Jerusalem’, he asked, ‘are there not moral forces, vaguely and dimly outlined, there stronger than any man could imagine, the moral force of Calvary and Sacrifice, the moral force of Zion and eternal hope, the moral force of Islam and obedience?’<sup>169</sup>

Sykes’s obsessive views put him at odds with policy makers at home and in the Middle East. According to Roger Adelson, by 1918 his minutes were ‘tolerated rather than heeded by Hardinge and Graham, for Sykes’s frank manner of expression broke all the diplomatic conventions to which these professionals conformed’.<sup>170</sup> In Cairo, Clayton warned him that ‘an Arab-Jewish-Armenian combination is so foreign to any previous experience and to existing sentiment that we must proceed with great caution’.<sup>171</sup> There was a serious danger, advised Clayton presciently, that proceeding along those lines could backfire: ‘by pushing [the Zionist cause] as hard as we appear to be doing, we are risking the possibility of Arab unity becoming something like an accomplished fact and being ranged against us’.<sup>172</sup> Not only could Arab unity be a problem, but, cautioned Clayton, the risk of fundamentalism could be close behind:

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<sup>168</sup> Document attached to letter from Sykes to Clayton, 16 November 1917, HHC DDSY2/11/74.

<sup>169</sup> ‘Jerusalem and its Future’, Interview with Mark Sykes, *The Observer*, 16 December 1917.

<sup>170</sup> Adelson, p. 266. ‘Sykes inundates the War Committee with a terrible lot of rubbish ...’ wrote Hardinge privately (Busch, p.170).

<sup>171</sup> Clayton to Sykes, 12 December 1917, HHC DDSY2/11/80.

<sup>172</sup> Clayton to Sykes, 15 December 1917, HHC DDSY2/11/83.

We have indications of considerable revivalist movement on Wahabi lines in Central Arabia, such as has in the past occurred when the prestige of Islam has fallen low. We are not yet in a position to appreciate the strength of this movement, but the defeats which Turkey has suffered, the lack of a temporal head in Islam, and finally the fall of Jerusalem conduce to fostering it.<sup>173</sup>

Sykes dismissed Clayton's concerns, arguing facetiously that 'patience, enthusiasm and determination surmount obstacles and make circumstances'.<sup>174</sup> He and his assistant, Ormsby-Gore, thought that those on the ground were a little too supportive of Muslims. 'One can't help noticing', wrote Ormsby-Gore irritably, 'the ineradicable tendency of the Englishman who has lived in India or the Sudan to favour quite unconsciously the Moslem both against Christian and Jew'.<sup>175</sup>

Sykes made a final visit to the region in November 1918. Ostensibly, his purpose was to assist Allenby in relation to political matters but, according to Adelson, Clayton had received a letter from David Hogarth stating that Sykes had been sent out to get him out of the way and that his views were to be ignored.<sup>176</sup> His papers from this visit contain a wealth of letters from Armenians, Jews, Christians and Arabs, appealing to Sykes for help in the promotion of their respective causes, as well as personal letters seeking his help on matters such as finding lost relatives and the reinstatement of property. Many of the letters display a touching, heartfelt belief in Sykes as a champion of the rights of the oppressed, reflecting the power with which he had communicated his support for those causes in the region as well as at home and elsewhere. Indeed, his office at the Foreign Office had, according to the Zionist leader, Nahum Sokolow, become by 1918 a meeting place and hub of activity for the promotion of the causes he espoused: 'There was a constant coming and going of Foreign Office men, MPs,

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Sykes to Clayton, 13 December 1917, HHC DDSY2/11/81.

<sup>175</sup> Ormsby-Gore to Sykes, 9 April 1918, HHC DDSY2/11/96.

<sup>176</sup> Adelson, p.281.

Armenian politicians, Mahommedan Mullahs, officers, journalists, representatives of Syrian Committees, and deputations from philanthropic societies'.<sup>177</sup> Irrespective of his diminished influence in diplomatic and political circles, his public reputation and high profile in the press meant that until the end of the war he remained the most potent figure in the moulding of opinion on the Middle East and British imperialism more generally. Thus, for example, when the Ministry of Information was established in March 1918 it was to Sykes that Beaverbrook immediately turned for instructions regarding who was to take responsibility for propaganda relating to Ottoman Asia.<sup>178</sup>

Sykes's last speech in the House of Commons was on 1 August 1918 and concerned the establishment of the League of Nations (he was a founding member of the League of Nations Society along with H.G.Wells, Gilbert Murray and J.H. Thomas). In it he envisaged a future free from war where imperialism took on an entirely new meaning and became a vehicle for the promotion of peace and civilisation instead of war and oppression:

The idea of annexation and conquest which urges people on to war, the practicability of conquest, seems to be growing more and more remote. We see Germany now with her perfect machinery conquering the Ukraine, but already she is beginning to meet active resistance, passive resistance, and revolutionary resistance. That, in fact, is a blow at the evil kind of Imperialism, the kind of Imperialism which hopes to conquer a place, annex it, and make it one's own .... All these things taken together, their cumulative effect is to make people more ready to consider the machinery for enforcing a permanent peace than the situation before the War made possible. One can conceive of things happening after the War which one never dreamed of before.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid., p.264, citing Sokolow's *History of Zionism*.

<sup>178</sup> Pembroke Wicks to Sykes, 6 May 1918, TNA FO 800/221/90.

<sup>179</sup> Mark Sykes, 1 August 1918, Hansard, HC Deb, 5th ser., vol.109, cc.730.

According to Hogarth, Sykes's idealism was only tempered on his last visit when he finally appreciated the enormity of what he was seeking in his espousal of Zionist, Arab and Armenian nationalist movements, as he experienced the dissension and suspicion in the region at first hand. Nevertheless, he returned to Europe in January 1919 optimistic that he could achieve the settlement he wanted at the Paris Peace Conference, seemingly unaware that the leaders of the causes he had championed were now charting their own disparate courses. He died in Paris in February 1919 of Spanish influenza.



As this chapter has shown, Sykes was an integral part of the propaganda machinery relating to the Ottoman Empire in its entirety. Not only did he shape cultural perceptions through his writing and speeches, but he also drove policy at a political and diplomatic level, as well as for propagandist purposes. Indeed, the relationship between cultural constructions on the one hand, and official policy on the other, is well illustrated by Sykes's work. His writing encapsulates the zeitgeist of wartime attitudes towards an 'East' that remained tantalizingly exotic and romantic whilst also providing a backdrop for a more prosaic dialectic on the place of British imperialism in the post-war twentieth century.

In Said's view 'the British and the French saw the Orient as a geographical—and cultural, political, demographical, sociological, and historical—entity over whose destiny they believed themselves to have traditional entitlement'.<sup>180</sup> Accordingly, for Said, Sykes represented all that was arrogant and exploitative about the British imperial project. Sykes's own comments about Britain's ability to control and manipulate the Arabs in order to further her own ends seemingly reinforce Said's condemnation. As an editorial in *The Times* smugly put it in November 1918, the establishment of independent states of Armenia, Arabia and Palestine

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<sup>180</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, p. 221.

would perfectly serve British interests as ‘if and when these States are constituted ... [they will] perform the same functions as buffer States to India as Turkey was to have performed before she betrayed her ancient alliance with us’.<sup>181</sup> Clearly, there were very practical and opportunistic reasons for supporting minority causes. However, alongside such hardheaded considerations, Sykes and his ilk, prompted by Wilsonian ideals, attempted to create a new kind of imperial project in the knowledge that to preserve and extend Britain’s influence after the war ostensible support of these ideals was crucial. ‘As far as [the British] are concerned,’ wrote Sykes, ‘if we follow an Imperialist or annexationist line we shall only appear before the world as self seekers, if we follow the policy we have outlined in the Baghdad proclamation then no man can criticise us’.<sup>182</sup> As part of this process, it was essential to depict the Arab cause as one instigated from within rather than manipulated from Cairo and Whitehall, and so in the process of recreating British imperialism, the Middle East was remoulded from an Ottoman backwater made up of degenerate subject races to, as historian James Renton puts it, ‘a region of oppressed historical nations, the Arabs, Jews, and Armenians, who were on the verge of a remarkable renaissance following their liberation and future tutelage by Britain and the entente’.<sup>183</sup> It was a synergistic process whereby the reshaping of British imperialism necessitated the creation of oppressed peoples warranting tutelage, and vice versa, and, as this chapter has demonstrated, Sykes was of fundamental significance in its articulation.

Whether Sykes truly believed in these causes, despite his passionate advocacy of them, remains moot. The findings of this chapter indicate that he was a man of conviction and principle only to the extent of his patriotism. His primary motivation was always the promotion of British interests and in this regard he was very much a man of his times. He dropped his Turcophile stance, adopted

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<sup>181</sup> *The Times*, 28 November 1918, Editorials, p.9.

<sup>182</sup> Sykes to Barnes, 25 September 1917, HHC DDSY2/11/70.

<sup>183</sup> Renton, p.647.



the Sherifian cause, negotiated the Sykes-Picot Agreement, and promoted Zionism and Armenian independence, primarily for this purpose. At the heart of his rationale was a conviction that maintenance of the Entente was the crux of British policy, a viewpoint that was to determine events at the Paris Peace Conference, to the detriment of the minority causes Sykes had championed. Sykes's racism also reflected the mores typical of his generation. His attitude towards the Arabs, Armenians and Jews was invariably patronising; whatever the views of the indigenous population, when it came to establishing what was 'best' for them, he knew better. Thus, even in 1918, at the height of his passionate advocacy of minority causes, he was outraged when he believed that Feisal had overstepped the boundaries of familiarity, observing that 'if an Oriental, even a Prince, becomes impertinent' it would lead to 'great dangers' in matters of Arab policy.<sup>184</sup> Terms such as 'annexation, military triumph, Prestige, White men's burdens' may have been 'consigned to the Diplomatic lumber-room' but it was still the Europeans who would be dictating the conditions in which the new doctrine of 'self-determination' would be applied.<sup>185</sup>

Whilst Sykes may have shared the widely held biodeterministic views of his contemporaries regarding the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race and its culture, ironically, many of the core values he recognised as key to that concept of Englishness were, in his opinion, under threat in the West but still tangible in the East: respect for authority, an established hierarchy, a clearly defined sense of right and wrong, simplicity of values, a martial tradition, and an ancient history. Despite its exoticism, it was the evocation of similarities not differences between an idealised West and the East that made it so appealing to him and others. Far from despising the East, Sykes yearned for a society that embraced elements of Oriental culture because it offered an antidote to the negative aspects of modernity. This was what attracted him and formed the basis of his lifelong

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<sup>184</sup> Sykes to Clayton, 3 June 1918, TNA FO 800/221/136. Feisal was King Hussein's son and Lawrence's protégé.

<sup>185</sup> Draft memo, undated and anonymous but likely 1918, TNA FO 800/221/208.

passion. At both a personal and a political level, Sykes's relationship with the East was thus complex and mutable. It was a reaction to the ongoing value system distinctive of the Edwardian society from which he came, both its perceived strengths and, importantly, its frailties, and yet it was simultaneously in a state of constant flux reflecting, as Porter puts it, 'the continual interactions and trade-offs between power and identity, tradition and calculation' as Britain navigated the strategic imperatives of war.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Porter, *Military Orientalism*, p.19.

## Chapter Four – Marmaduke Pickthall: The Dissenter's Perspective

Between 1903 and 1921, Marmaduke Pickthall published nine novels set in Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Yemen and Turkey and three collections of short stories mainly about the Near East. He published a further six novels set in England. Pickthall made his living from writing and, as well as his fictional output, he wrote extensively for a number of journals, in particular, *The Athenæum* and *The New Age* which, according to Samuel Hynes, was one of the two most advanced literary journals of the time.<sup>1</sup> This chapter will examine both his fictional works and his journalism. There is no surviving collection of his personal correspondence and hence it relies predominantly on his published material.<sup>2</sup>

Described by Mark Sykes's son as 'perhaps the best Orientalist of his time'<sup>3</sup> Pickthall was widely considered by his peers to be one of the most penetrating observers of the 'Eastern mind'.<sup>4</sup> Yet, despite his extensive output, Pickthall was not an influential figure either culturally or politically. Indeed, even his most acclaimed novel, *Saïd the Fisherman*, did not stand the test of time despite being both a commercial and critical success on its publication in 1903. Writing in 1923, E.M. Forster described him as 'a writer of much merit who has not yet come into his own'.<sup>5</sup> Unbeknown to Forster, Pickthall was not to write another novel and never did 'come into his own'. He is nevertheless a critical figure for

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<sup>1</sup> Hynes, *A War Imagined*, p.22. It 'played a central role in the debates over modernism and in the social and political issues of the day' ([www.modjournal.org](http://www.modjournal.org)).

<sup>2</sup> Whilst Pickthall's biographer, Anne Fremantle, refers to a number of Pickthall's personal letters, Peter Clark, Pickthall's more recent biographer, has informed the author of this thesis that Pickthall himself did not retain his correspondence. Some correspondence between him and Aubrey Herbert is located in Herbert's papers in the Somerset Heritage Centre.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Sykes, 'Palestine Conference', *The Yorkshire Post*, 9 February 1939.

<sup>4</sup> 'London Notes and Comment', *The Yorkshire Post*, 21 May 1936. He is sometimes bracketed with Wilfred Scawen Blunt (1840-1922) as a leading philo-Islamist of the period, however, their views were actually very different, for example, Blunt's initial enthusiasm for the tenets of Islam diminished in later life whereas Pickthall eventually converted, and, unlike Pickthall, Blunt was a vocal critic of British imperial policy.

<sup>5</sup> E.M. Forster, *Abinger Harvest* (London, 1936), p.250 – from an article originally published in 1923.

the purposes of this research for several reasons. Of particular interest, in the context of the previous chapter, is his relationship with Mark Sykes both on a personal level and as an ideological counterpoint. As will be seen below, the wartime trajectories of the two men intertwined and diverged in fascinating ways that have not previously been illuminated by either Sykes's or Pickthall's biographers. Indeed, of the two biographies of Pickthall, Anne Fremantle's tends towards the hagiographic, whilst the other, Peter Clark's admirable *Marmaduke Pickthall: British Muslim*, explores his writings and his ideas but covers his entire life in a comparatively concise volume and hence is necessarily brief in its exploration of the war years.<sup>6</sup> Neither has as its focal point Pickthall's role as a vocal critic of the government's wartime policy towards the Ottoman Empire whose writing was prolific, erudite and incisive, offering the historian an important insight into the mindset of an informed outsider. Further, irrespective of the influence that may be ascribed to him with the benefit of hindsight, at the time, his willingness to criticise not only Foreign Office policy, but also that of Wellington House, rendered him a notable dissenting figure, and one that attracted the attention of the highest authorities. As shall be seen below, in 1917, his journalism was considered so seditious and potentially disruptive to the stability of the Empire that the Foreign Office contemplated his prosecution under the Defence of the Realm Act.

Although he was an outsider, Pickthall was not, as has been seen, the only Turcophile in Britain during the war years. Indeed, he had a number of influential friends, among them Lord Cromer and the aristocratic poet, politician and explorer, Aubrey Herbert, who shared many of his views, but, unlike others, Pickthall was never willing to compromise his principles for the sake of political or military expediency. As a consequence he was capable of intransigence and gross errors of judgment, notably when he disputed the CUP's culpability in relation to the Armenian massacres of 1915, but, equally, he was capable of great

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<sup>6</sup> Anne Fremantle, *Loyal Enemy* (London, 1938) and Peter Clark, *Marmaduke Pickthall: British Muslim* (London, 1986).

clarity being unencumbered by doctrine or policy. The result is that whilst his writing, particularly his journalism, appeared decidedly polemical to his peers, from today's perspective many of his opinions seem remarkably modern and farsighted, reflecting a genuinely compassionate and tolerant humanity as well as considerable knowledge and understanding of Islam and the Near East.

#### ***4.1 Pickthall before the war***

Born in 1875, Pickthall was almost a direct contemporary of Sykes. Although his background was humbler (his father was a clergyman), he benefited from a securer, more conventional childhood although, like Sykes, his education was peripatetic. It did, however, include two years at Harrow which undoubtedly shaped his future attitudes towards politicians and the Establishment and provided him with the material he needed for his satiric 1919 novel, *Sir Limpidus* (see below). Like Sykes, he spent time as a young man exploring the East but he would have eschewed Sykes's mode of travel. Rather than the ostentatious 'Grand Tour' approach favoured by Mark and his father, Tatton Sykes, laden with baggage, servants and interpreters, Pickthall spent two years in Egypt, Syria, Palestine and Lebanon immersing himself in indigenous culture and languages (he was a 'genius for languages' claimed his biographer, Anne Fremantle, who could learn 'any modern language in two months').<sup>7</sup> He became a fluent Arabic speaker and actively chose to live in the poorer districts of the cities he visited so that he could mix with the locals. He 'frequented Turkish baths; ate native meals and slept in native houses – following the customs of the people of the land in all respects'.<sup>8</sup> Expatriates disapproved of his mixing with the local population which, as Pickthall put it, was 'one of those things which were never done, nor even contemplated by the kind of person who had always been my model' and when his mother found out he was summoned home.<sup>9</sup> Before he left he was

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<sup>7</sup> Fremantle, p.265.

<sup>8</sup> Marmaduke Pickthall, *Oriental Encounters, Palestine and Syria (1894-5-6)* (London, 1918), p.5.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.2.

offered the position of Vice Consul at Haifa but the offer was withdrawn when it was discovered that he was only twenty. Son of a clergyman, and Old Harrovian, at this point in his life Pickthall was still conventional enough to be deemed appropriate material for such a position.

Just like Sykes, Pickthall was captivated and enthralled by the ‘gorgeous East’. What struck him most was the ‘joyousness of [Eastern] life compared with anything that [he] had seen in Europe’.<sup>10</sup> He had departed for the region unsure of who he was or where his future lay and, like Sykes, found the East ‘provided him with emotional reserves’ and a path to self-belief and identity.<sup>11</sup> The romance of the region was a potent intoxicant and inspiration. When he left Beirut his Arabic tutor gave him a copy of *The Thousand and One Nights* as a leaving present and, even thirty years later, Pickthall was able to write that it summoned for him evocations of ‘the daily life of Damascus, Jerusalem, Aleppo, Cairo, and the other cities as I found it’.<sup>12</sup> As he recalled in middle age, ‘he had been bowled over by the romance of the East, by what he might reluctantly have acknowledged was a sentimental attitude’ but one which was common in English travellers.<sup>13</sup> When he returned to England, he tried writing about his experiences and achieved literary success in 1903 with a novel, *Saïd the Fisherman*.<sup>14</sup> The eponymous hero is an amoral Syrian peasant, and the book records his adventures and misadventures from 1860 to 1882, benchmarked at either end by real historical events, namely riots in Damascus in July 1860 and in Alexandria in 1882. Drawing on his close interaction with the Syrian Arabs he had met during his travels, Pickthall offered an engrossing story in a culturally and historically accurate setting. He was interested in both commercial success and

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<sup>10</sup> Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Cultural Side of Islam* (Madras, 1937), p. 37.

<sup>11</sup> Clark, p.12.

<sup>12</sup> Pickthall, *The Cultural Side of Islam*, p.37.

<sup>13</sup> Clark, p.12.

<sup>14</sup> Marmaduke Pickthall, *Saïd the Fisherman* (London, 1910 edition). It was ‘translated into French, German, and Danish, did very well in America, and by 1927 had gone into fourteen editions’ (Fremantle, p.119).

literary acclaim and so, as well as Saïd's dramatic life story, Pickthall catered to the appetites of a British public with a taste for literature, fictional and travel writing, that informed about an East they found alluring and fascinating but, equally, alien and repellent.

On one level Pickthall relied on prevailing cultural tropes surrounding the East, both positive and negative. Arab hospitality and kindness were emphasised but also a propensity towards greed and corruption. In the words of one character, 'bakshish is lord of all'.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, unlike stoic Britons, the Arabs react in unmanly ways. For example, when Saïd loses his money he flings himself on the ground 'moaning, howling and blubbing'.<sup>16</sup> Physically, the East was a paradise of 'vivid blue' seas, sands the 'colour of a ripe orange', horizons 'soft and pearly'.<sup>17</sup> In contrast, when the hapless Saïd ends up in London he encounters a dystopian nightmare. Approaching from the Thames, he sees a world that:

seemed dead, and the stir of human life upon it loathsome as the foul brood of corruption. The river wound between two banks of fog, on which strange shapes of roof and chimney, tower and steeple, and the masts of ships appeared carven or painted by a tremulous hand. From all sides clouds of smoke arose, feeding the gloom and blending with it perpetually. It was as if the whole land smouldered.<sup>18</sup>

Pickthall vividly described the land of modernity and industrial progress, feared and loathed by Sykes and others. The loss of humanity and civilisation in the interests of capitalism are starkly imagined in Pickthall's descriptions of the great metropolis and imperial epicentre.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p.56.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.79.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 294.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p.276. Is it a coincidence that Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness' is narrated from a boat on the Thames? It was serialised in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1899 and first published with two other stories in 1902. Whether Pickthall had read it or not, Conrad's final allusion to the Thames as a symbol of British imperial activity leading into 'the heart of an immense darkness' resonates in *Saïd*.

<sup>19</sup> H.G. Wells admired Pickthall as well as Sykes. He wrote to him congratulating him on the success of *Saïd* (Fremantle, p.119) and, indeed, as evidenced in his own novels, such as *The Island of Doctor Moreau* and *The War of the Worlds*, seemingly shared both Pickthall and Sykes's fears of modern, urban life.

What attracted the critics was Pickthall's novel approach of telling the story from a humble Muslim Syrian's perspective. 'If Mr Pickthall be a Briton, he is an artificer of astonishing cleverness,' observed one reviewer.<sup>20</sup> 'Into this Mohammedan romance ... he has breathed a spirit so Oriental as almost to persuade his reader that Saïd is as real as Sindbad'.<sup>21</sup> *The Athenæum* considered that 'it is worth a place upon any shelf beside Morier's 'Haji Baba,' and as an exposition of Syrian life and character we know nothing to equal it. Not even the early part of Burton's 'Pilgrimage' has more intimate charm or more of the glamour of Eastern story'.<sup>22</sup> Whereas most writers and novelists looked at the region from the outside, Pickthall looked out from within. In E.M. Forster's words, 'as soon as we open his cheerful pages, the western world vanishes without a malediction, like night at the opening of day'.<sup>23</sup> So insightful was it thought to be that, according to Fremantle, 'it was given to British officials in Egypt to be studied as a textbook of the manners of the country'.<sup>24</sup>

In depicting the Syrian perspective, one of Pickthall's aims was undoubtedly to articulate the empathy he himself felt towards the indigenous population and its religion, thereby delving further than conventional characterisation. Saïd himself is a dishonest rogue, but Pickthall used other characters to present a nuanced articulation of good, honest, Muslim Arabs. Ismail Abbâs, a Muslim notable, is described as moral, knowledgeable and devout, a 'byword for learning and uprightness'.<sup>25</sup> Saïd's encounter with him reveals Ismail Abbâs to be a man of wisdom and tolerance who yearns for the heyday of enlightened Islam when 'learning flourished like a young tree, and the desire of knowledge was with

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<sup>20</sup> *The Academy and Literature*, 29 August 1903, p.190.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> *The Athenæum*, 1 August 1903, p.150.

<sup>23</sup> Forster, *Abinger Harvest*, p.251.

<sup>24</sup> Fremantle, p.119.

<sup>25</sup> Pickthall, *Saïd*, p.87.



every man as the breath of life'.<sup>26</sup> On a humbler level, Saïd's friend Selim is faithful and hard-working. He provides a moral compass for Saïd, steering him, for example, away from brothels as, to visit one is 'a shame for a true believer'.<sup>27</sup> Islam itself is presented evenhandedly as a religion that could attract, on the one hand, unthinking louts like Saïd, for whom it is an entirely superficial and opportunistic experience providing, amongst other things, a pretext for criminal behaviour during the riots ('men, women and children were dragged out of the shadowy doorways to be hacked to death on the causeway beneath the ribbon of peaceful blue sky ... The mob jeered and reviled their last agonies ... And the name of Allah was in every man's mouth').<sup>28</sup> Pickthall illustrated how, like any religion, the precepts of Islam could be exploited by the unscrupulous. For example, he sardonically described how Saïd considers himself a good Muslim because he 'had not neglected to pray to Allah five times a day, had eaten no pork, and had been careful to avoid handling any unclean thing'.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, Pickthall sought to demonstrate how, in the right hands, Islam could offer a viable spiritual and cultural alternative to Christianity. He captured, for example, the concept of Islam as an inherent part of the social structure, conveying the fellowship and shared morality it engendered, when he observed how a gregarious coffee house throng collectively stop talking and take out their prayer rugs when the muezzin calls them to prayer and 'a shrill murmur from the city floated out over the darkening gardens – the chanting from a hundred minarets, the voice of the common conscience bidding all men pray'.<sup>30</sup>

As with Sykes's pre-war travel writing, the Turks are depicted as benign rulers, although Pickthall was evidently of the view that his opinion ran contrary to the

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p.94.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p.77.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p.156.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.194.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p.86. Where Islam was 'more than a Faith, more than a battle-cry, more, much more ... Islam, an attitude towards life both exquisite and durable' (E.M. Forster, *Passage to India* (Aylesbury, 1979), p.41).

norm. Accordingly, a character who makes his living as a beggar, describes how when he begged from a European missionary he ‘told him a grievous tale of how my house had been burned and all my children killed by Turkish soldiers. This I said knowing that a Frank loves always to hear evil of the Turks’.<sup>31</sup> In the years after the publication of *Saïd the Fisherman*, Pickthall became increasingly outspoken about what he perceived as Western hostility to the Turks. He found a means of expression in subsequent novels, and also in journalism, particularly in numerous articles and book reviews for *The Athenæum* and *The New Age*. Between 1903 and 1914 he became known as something of an authority on ‘eastern subjects’ in much the same way as Sykes. During a subsequent visit to Egypt in 1907 he made the acquaintance of other influential thinkers on the East including Sykes himself as well as Valentine Chirol, George Lloyd and Aubrey Herbert.<sup>32</sup>

Although a committed Turcophile, Pickthall approved of Britain’s Egyptian regime. He articulated his position in his 1908 novel, *The Children of the Nile*: ‘it did not greatly matter in whose hands rested the reigns of power – so long as justice prevailed and religion flourished. Such ends were achieved when Egypt was controlled by red-faced loud-speaking Englishmen’.<sup>33</sup> He continued to defend Cromer’s administration during the war, in particular, in relation to the controversial Denshawāï incident, which, as has been seen in Chapter One, was capitalised upon by the Germans for propagandist purposes. His pro-imperialist stance is also evident in a review he wrote in August 1909 of another Egyptian-based novel, *The White Prophet* by popular novelist, Hall Caine.<sup>34</sup> Hall Caine, like Pickthall, empathised with the local population, but unlike Pickthall, he took a nationalist stance. With echoes of the Mahdist movement in Sudan, and General Gordon’s defeat there, Hall Caine envisaged an anti-British uprising led

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p.23.

<sup>32</sup> Clark, p.15.

<sup>33</sup> Clark, p.86.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Henry Hall Caine, *The White Prophet* (New York, 1909).

by an unworldly prophet bent not on seizing power but on returning Egypt to a more spiritual, less corrupt state. Pickthall did not think the book warranted attention from a literary perspective (Hall Caine was considered decidedly lowbrow, his works amounting to little more than the ‘Penny Dreadfuls’ of the Victorian era) but felt himself duty bound to review it comprehensively because it ‘has been translated into Arabic, and hailed with pæans by a section of the native press, thus attaining an importance, in regard to Egypt, which seems to us beyond its merits’.<sup>35</sup> Pickthall felt that Hall Caine’s characterisation of both English and Egyptian characters was poor, observing sardonically that

except for their free use of words like “damn” and “fool,” the “English” characters in this book have nothing English about them. They stamp and gnash their teeth, fling themselves upon the ground, and weep and rave, like Orientals ... till by the end of the book we are almost tempted to believe that, while Mr. Caine may have conversed with Orientals (through a dragoman [like Sykes]), he has never seen or heard, much less consorted with, an Englishman.<sup>36</sup>

Hall Caine’s knowledge and understanding of Egypt and its peoples was equally lacking in Pickthall’s view. He pointed out, for example, that ‘Mr. Caine uses Mohammedan as a synonym for Egyptian more than once, thus ignoring the existence of the Copts as part of the Egyptian nation and their right to equal consideration with the Muslims’.<sup>37</sup> Further, Caine dangerously misjudged the political situation in present day Egypt: ‘the author’s picture of the fanaticism of the Mohammedans is much exaggerated, as concerning Egypt at the present day; and his suggestion of a return to the bare Coran, as preaching tolerance, sounds the depth of his ignorance of the whole subject’.<sup>38</sup> The only concession Pickthall made was to point out that Hall Caine at least did not fall into the ‘common error of confusing civilization, in the modern sense, with Christianity’, a point that

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<sup>35</sup> Marmaduke Pickthall, ‘The White Prophet by Hall Caine’, *The Athenæum*, 28 August 1909, p.232.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

went to the heart of Pickthall's own ethos that Islam could be as much a force for progress as Christianity.<sup>39</sup>

According to Michael Diamond, author of *'Lesser Breeds': Racial Attitudes in Popular British Culture, 1890-1940*, Hall Caine's book was one of his least successful commercially, not because of its implausibility but because of his unpatriotic, anti-imperialist stance.<sup>40</sup> George Bernard Shaw defended Caine's position in a preface to a second edition, arguing that it enlightened the reader on the Egyptian case, but that edition never appeared and the preface was published separately as a pamphlet. Taking a similar stance to Pickthall, *The Manchester Guardian* took issue with Bernard Shaw's defence, in particular, his argument that Mr Caine should be listened to because of the number of books he sold. 'Mr Shaw brushes aside what he calls the hackneyed literary attack with the strange remark that Mr. CAINE "sells a thousand copies where most other men of letters either sell a hundred or cannot escape from journalism into books at all," and he ridicules talk about style as meaning merely that Mr. CAINE's is different from "ours"'.<sup>41</sup> On the contrary argued *The Manchester Guardian*, as well as other reviewers such as those in *The Spectator* and *The Saturday Review*, the size of Caine's readership was relevant only to the extent that it highlighted his irresponsibility in exploiting 'his popularity with a half-educated public to inflame sedition and defame his country'.<sup>42</sup>

In contrast to Caine, Pickthall was invariably a thoughtful, careful writer of fiction who strove to be even-handed and to enlighten and educate rather than proselytize. However, following the Balkan Wars and a four month stay in Constantinople in 1913, he became more ardent in his support of the Turkish

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Michael Diamond, *'Lesser Breeds': Racial Attitudes in Popular British Culture, 1890-1940* (London, 2006), p.65.

<sup>41</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, 14 October 1909, p.6.

<sup>42</sup> *The Spectator*, 14 August 1909, p.244.

administration and more politicised in his views on Britain's relationship with it. He founded an Anglo-Ottoman Society to 'advocate a political and commercial understanding between Great Britain and Turkey and firmly to oppose encroachment on the Ottoman Empire'.<sup>43</sup> The Society was a success, attracting the support of, amongst others Sir Louis Mallet (British Ambassador to Constantinople), Aubrey Herbert and E.G. Browne (Sykes's old Cambridge tutor).<sup>44</sup> In March 1914, his account of his time in Turkey (which first appeared as a series of articles in *The New Age*) was published in book form as *With the Turk in Wartime*. Pickthall's stance was typical of men like Sykes and Herbert, who in 1914, earnestly sought the maintenance of Britain's historical relationship with Turkey. He considered himself a traditional English Tory of the Disraeli mould for whom patriotism and a commitment to the Ottoman Empire were not incompatible: 'loving England and the East,' argued Pickthall, 'beholding our great Indian Empire, [Disraeli] wished England to become the benefactress of the East, its guide to freer life and more enlightened institutions'.<sup>45</sup> Contrary to popular belief, argued Pickthall, Disraeli's scheme was not peculiar to him but the result of an historical Eastern policy supported by many great nineteenth-century statesmen:

Palmerston or Peel, by Canning, Pitt, and even earlier statesmen, who saw that England's greatness depended not on these islands on the edge of Europe, nor on the annexation of new regions on the outskirts of the inhabited world, but on the possession of rich countries in the East, which many nations coveted.<sup>46</sup>

Strategically, too, Pickthall considered the Ottoman Empire to be vital and he admired

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<sup>43</sup> Fremantle, p.228.

<sup>44</sup> Sykes was not a member (Sykes to Herbert, 1 April 1915, SHC DD/HER/53).

<sup>45</sup> Pickthall, 'Pan Islamism as a British Policy', *The New Age*, 21 Jan 1915, XVI p.304.

<sup>46</sup> Marmaduke Pickthall, 'The League of Nations and the British Empire', *The New Age*, 3 April 1919, XXIV, p.353.

the wisdom of our ancestors who sought to interpose some independent buffer state of military power at every point between our frontier and the frontier of the Russian Empire. An independent Turkey was regarded by our older, better-educated statesmen as just as necessary to the structure of the British Empire in the East as a safety-valve is to a steam engine: do away with it – the thing explodes.<sup>47</sup>

For Pickthall, the success of British rule in Egypt and India, was founded on ‘universal toleration’. Like Sykes, he vociferously objected to the response of the English press to the Balkan wars, namely the way they ignored or understated atrocities committed by Christians on Muslims but not the other way round. Pickthall viewed this coverage as tantamount to a fanatical crusade and one that served the ends not of the British Empire but of its ‘greatest Eastern rival’, Russia.<sup>48</sup> He argued, that the traditional British imperial approach reflected a tolerant and universalist Christian ethos:

It seemed to me that there were two kinds of Christianity; one, which would limit its benevolence to Christian peoples; the other, which regarded the world with all its creeds and races as the theatre for Christian charity and Christian justice. The first, which still prevailed in Russia and the Balkan states, and still could claim adherents here in England, was essentially the same fanaticism which we blame so loudly when it appears to the more ignorant Mohammedans. The second gave the spirit of our Eastern empire, the spirit of humanity and tolerance which one associates with modern life.<sup>49</sup>

Not only was Britain’s current anti-Turkish approach intolerant and immoral, it was also shortsighted as it failed to take into account the effect on Muslim opinion within the Empire, or to recognise and embrace Eastern efforts, led by Turkey, to modernise and emulate Western nations. Indeed, in Pickthall’s view, far from embracing Eastern efforts at modernisation, Western powers ‘shrink

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<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Fremantle, p.180.

<sup>48</sup> Marmaduke Pickthall, *With the Turk in Wartime* (London, 1914), p.ix.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p.x.

back in horror as did Frankenstein before his monster, trying frantically but in vain to wreck their work'.<sup>50</sup>

#### ***4.2 Pickthall During the War***

Pickthall's endorsement of the British Empire was founded on the same basis as his support of the Turkish regime. He believed that both were built on tolerance of others. Although he was interested in the political dimension, it was the spiritual and the moral elements that formed the cornerstone of his principles. Perhaps it was for this reason that after the outbreak of war, unlike Sykes, he was unable to discard his Turcophile leanings. Throughout the war (and after), he retained unwavering loyalty towards the Turks and the CUP and, as the opportunistic Sykes's influence and importance grew exponentially as he reshaped his views in light of wartime exigencies, Pickthall grew increasingly ostracized from mainstream political opinion and by 1917 even faced criminalization for his support of the enemy. The growing gulf between his own views and the mainstream did not stop him from continuing to take a pro-Turkish stance in his writing despite the obvious commercial risks. In keeping with the era, he wrote a number of novels with a propagandist agenda but, in contrast to Wellington House's authors, his were in pursuit of a personal crusade to promote the Turks and their religion.

A 1916 novel (which Fremantle claimed was 'highly praised and widely read'<sup>51</sup>), *The House of War*, typifies Pickthall's approach which was to expound the idea of Islam and Turkish rule to an English-reading world and dispel unfavourable western interpretations of Islamic practices and attitudes, without preaching.<sup>52</sup> In this particular novel he deployed a naive young English missionary, Elsie Wilding, to explain the harmful attitudes of Christian missionaries and the

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p.xi.

<sup>51</sup> Fremantle, p.258.

<sup>52</sup> Marmaduke Pickthall, *The House of War* (New York, 1916).

damage they could cause. Elsie has been brought up in England to believe that Muslims were savage and uncivilised, thus when she meets the Wâli (a local Muslim governor) she is disappointed to find him ‘immaculately clad in European fashion,’ because she had expected ‘something picturesque and barbarous, more evidently wicked than this neat old gentleman, who, but for his fez, might easily have been mistaken for a French diplomatist’.<sup>53</sup> The Muslims she encounters are not only sophisticated and cultured, they are also wise and tolerant. Accordingly, when Elsie meets the Wâli’s daughter, Emineh, she finds a girl who is sweet and attractive, articulate, and educated in a tolerant, broad-minded fashion, far removed from the subjugated and terrorised victim of an Eastern harem that typified the British notion of Muslim womanhood. Emineh explains to Elsie the benevolent attitude of Ottoman rule to Christianity. Christians in the Empire had ‘always been permitted to perform their own religion. They were not oppressed any more than were the poor Mahometans till they began to wish to ruin the whole country’.<sup>54</sup> The British Consul explains to Elsie that there was ‘far more want and wretchedness among the Muslims’ than among the Christians who had been ‘cockered up and educated by the various missions, backed up by the foreign consuls’.<sup>55</sup> Another character, a local Christian Syrian notable, Sheykh Bakîr, reflects that ‘he had heard his grandfather declare that [the bitter enmity between Christian and Muslim] was something new, the bad result of foreign interference. Before the Muscovites and Franks began their meddling, the old gentleman had been wont to say, Christians and Muslims understood each other and were better neighbours’.<sup>56</sup>

Thus Pickthall had Muslim and Christian, Englishman and Syrian, man and woman, advancing the view that Ottoman rule was benign, and that enmity

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p.27. Like Wellington House’s writers attempted with Armenians and Arabs, Pickthall highlighted physical similarities between Muslims and Westerners as a means of enabling the reader to identify with them.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p.38.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p.82.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p.84.



between Christian and Muslim was a consequence of Western interference. His own position was most clearly articulated in the character of Fenn, an enlightened Englishman and romantic hero of the novel, who tells Elsie:

Before the missionaries of all Christian sects and nations flocked to this unlucky country, the native Christians were in general contented. If most of them were poor, so were most of the Mahometans. The burden of oppression was on both alike. There was then a chance that the two religions – you may call them races – would advance together to a higher stage of civilization. Now the Christians are made discontented and seditious, petted by the foreign missionaries, who pour contempt on all the customs of the country and teach their converts the innate inferiority of the Muslims, basing their arguments on such unChristian things as iron-clads and steam-engines and factories.<sup>57</sup>

The Syrian characters approve of Fenn. Sheykh Bakîr respects him because '[he] takes men as he finds them, as God made them .... his character is more that of a good Turk than of a Frank'.<sup>58</sup> Again, Pickthall emphasised the importance of tolerance towards others not only as the foundation of moral behaviour, but also as the key to successful imperial rule. In this respect Ottoman and British imperial methods overlapped, although Pickthall believed that Western nations benefited from a 'higher stage of civilisation'. 'Civilisation' did not mean industrial progress, but a more enlightened, humanitarian, approach to things like 'personal security and attempts at even-handed justice', and it was the duty of Western nations to help Eastern nations, under the leadership of the Turks, to reach this state.<sup>59</sup> Thus, for Pickthall 'Oriental' government was less progressive than Western government but neither term should, in his opinion, be used interchangeably with Muslim or Christian government as either religion was capable of being associated with civilised, or indeed despotic, government depending on the circumstances.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p.187.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p.178.

<sup>59</sup> Pickthall, 'Concerning Denshawāi', *The New Age*, 26 February 1914, XIV p.520.

Whilst Pickthall believed that the Ottoman Empire would benefit from Western guidance, he thought that only the Turks could control the disparate population of Ottoman Asia. ‘Whatever peace and order have existed for the last five centuries in Syria, Mesopotamia and the Kurd-Armenian vilayets is owing to the Turkish force’.<sup>60</sup> Without them, the region would lose ‘the only factor which has made for peace and progress’.<sup>61</sup> Pickthall’s belief in the essentially progressive nature of the CUP regime meant that when stories of the Armenian genocide began to emerge in the spring of 1915 he disputed them:

[The allegation that they] took place at the command, or in any sense with the connivance, of the Turkish Government, seems most improbable .... The chief desire of the present rulers in Turkey has always been to prove their country worthy to take rank among the civilised, enlightened empires of the world, and their ideas of civilisation and enlightenment are derived from English and French sources, not from German frightfulness.<sup>62</sup>

Instead, he claimed any Armenian deaths at the hands of the Turks were a reaction either to Armenian hostility or the result of violence on the part of the Kurds or Arabs. Thus, in *The House of War*, the Wâli tells Elsie that Christians had suffered at Muslim hands only because ‘we love our land and our religion, and when either is assailed we kill’.<sup>63</sup> He goes on to explain, ‘the massacres have never been on one side only’.<sup>64</sup> Later, Fenn tells Elsie that the West only hears Christian tales of woe because the Turks are too proud to ‘plead their case before the world. The native Christians make the most of theirs. Always remember that when you hear Turks accused’.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Pickthall, ‘The Fate of Turkey’, *The New Age*, 11 March 1915, XVI, p.503.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Pickthall, “‘Defence of the Realm’ in Turkey”, *The New Age*, 4 November 1915, XVIII, p.5. It is worth noting that although the CUP turned against the Armenians, before the war they had earnestly sought to protect their rights such that in 1909 and 1910 their opponents had openly derided them as defenders of Christian and Jewish interests (Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, p.62).

<sup>63</sup> Pickthall, *House of War*, p.41.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p.41.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p.304.

Pickthall took particular exception to Arnold Toynbee's 1915 pamphlet, *Armenian Atrocities: The Murder of a Nation*. In an article entitled 'Gospel of Hate' he excoriated Toynbee for his racism, for effectively claiming that the Armenians warranted special care and attention simply because they were Christian and were therefore better than Muslims. As discussed in Chapter One, Toynbee had emphasised in his pamphlet that disgraced Armenian girls were 'Christian women, as civilized and refined as the women of Western Europe' and Pickthall asked in return:

What does Toynbee mean by that? Does he mean that the peasant girls and women of Armenia are as civilized and refined as English ladies of the wealthy classes, or as the girls and women of a Suffolk village, or as the harridans of a London slum, or as the prostitutes of London and Paris? The statement is unnecessary, and it seems to me deplorable, because it is an appeal to the religious fanaticism, being based on the fanatical and altogether false assumption that Christians are intrinsically better than Mohammedans, and their lives of more worth.<sup>66</sup>

As has been seen in Chapter One, that is exactly what Toynbee and numerous others (for example, Stuermer and Ian Hamilton) seemingly believed. Pickthall's vociferous objection to this Christian 'fanaticism' was undoubtedly what prompted *The House of War* in which he sought to show not only the mischief caused by Christian missionaries, but also that Christian Arabs were just as capable of violence as their Muslim counterparts. 'Are the Eastern Christians better people than the Mohammedans in time of peace; more honest, kind, and just in all their dealings?' he asked.<sup>67</sup> And he answered, 'They are not'.<sup>68</sup> And, in war, he argued, the Christians were equally ruthless, being, like the Muslims,

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<sup>66</sup> Pickthall, 'The Gospel of Hate', in *The New Age*, 25 November 1915, XVIII p.81. Toynbee later expressed regret of this kind of writing in *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey* (1922). Interestingly, in subsequent years Toynbee gave high praise to Pickthall's translation of the Koran, noting that he had 'approached the task of translation in the spirit of humility and reverence with which an adherent of any religion regards his own religion's holy scripture'. ('Testament of Islam' in *The Observer*, 8 April 1956, p.13). Pickthall's translation of the Koran remains an authoritative text.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. p.82.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

‘Orientals’ in outlook. In response, Toynbee defended his position in *The New Age*, arguing that he agreed both Christians and Muslims were capable of committing atrocities but that this did not negate the unique characteristics of the current events.<sup>69</sup>

In 1916, Pickthall took on Sykes, ‘outing’ him as a hypocritical opportunist who had gone from reviling the Armenians to promoting their cause and sympathising with their plight. Pickthall’s article in *The New Age* was prompted by Sykes’s letter to *The Times* of 20 April 1916. In it, he distanced himself from a pamphlet by a Captain C.F. Dixon-Johnson, *The Armenians*, in which extracts from Sykes’s books were cited offering a negative depiction of the Armenians. As has been seen in the preceding chapter, by April of 1916 Sykes had embraced the idea of the break up of Ottoman Asia and the championing of the rights of its subject peoples as a means of extending British interests in the region. Needless to say, Dixon-Johnson’s references to his prior work sat uncomfortably with his newfound views and Sykes was anxious to ensure that there could be no doubt as to his position. Accordingly, in his letter to *The Times*, he wrote that far from being ‘in sympathy with the underlying ideas which inspire its author [Dixon-Johnson]’ he had the ‘very deepest sympathy with unfortunate Armenian peoples, whose millennium of martyrdom’ was, he hoped, now ‘reaching its final stage’.<sup>70</sup> Pickthall responded with alacrity in *The New Age*, expressing his disconcertion at the tone of Sykes’s disclaimer. Citing extracts from *The Caliphs’ Last Heritage*, in which Sykes nailed his colours firmly to the mast, Pickthall (somewhat disingenuously one must assume) expressed himself anxious to ascertain ‘what has caused this sudden change in his opinions’.<sup>71</sup> In May Pickthall corresponded further with Sykes when he became involved in a scheme to make a separate peace with Turkey, instigated in Switzerland by a group of Turks. Unsurprisingly, Sykes batted this away. By now, with the terms of the Sykes-

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<sup>69</sup> Arnold Toynbee, ‘Letters to the Editor’, *The New Age*, 2 December 1915, XVIII, p.118.

<sup>70</sup> Mark Sykes, ‘Letters to the Editor,’ *The Times*, 20 April 1916.

<sup>71</sup> Marmaduke Pickthall, ‘Sir Mark Sykes and the Armenians’, *The New Age*, 4 May 1916, XIX, p.6.

Picot Agreement finalised and the Arab Revolt imminent, peace with Turkey was the last thing that Sykes wanted.

In early 1917, when the new anti-Turkish propaganda campaign was launched, Pickthall was well-known as an Eastern expert but the continuation of his vocal Turcophile stance after hostilities commenced ruled him out in the eyes of the Foreign Office as a potential source for propagandist material. In a letter to the Admiralty, Montgomery observed that there was a shortage of experts to take the government's position and 'unfortunately some of the authorities with the best knowledge of the Turk are rather too fond of him, such as Sir Edwin Pears and Marmaduke Pickthall'.<sup>72</sup> Pickthall alienated himself further in a speech for the Central Islamic Society in the summer of 1917 at Caxton Hall, which received coverage in the press and attracted the attention of the Foreign Office and the Arab Bureau. *The Near East* reported that Pickthall had asserted that the only reason Palestine was a holy land alike for Christian, Jew and Muslim was because of Ottoman tolerance. In contrast, 'when the Crusaders conquered Palestine and ruled it for a time, they were far from showing the same tolerance as had been shown by the Moslems'.<sup>73</sup> In Pickthall's view it would be 'a world disaster if [Palestine] were taken from Moslem government'.<sup>74</sup> He warned that whereas the Zionist immigrants in Palestine were 'marked by an extreme and narrow fanaticism', the 'Moslems did not hate Jews or Christians as such, and had always tolerated those religions in their country'.<sup>75</sup> He predicted that Zionist supremacy would mean 'oppression for the other elements of the population' in the future.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Montgomery to Fitzmaurice, 26 March 1917, TNA FO 395/139/42320.

<sup>73</sup> Extract from *The Near East*, 13 July 1917 attached to a letter from Albina to Sykes, 10 August 1917, HHC DDSY2/11/67.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

Sykes's associate, Albina, reported to Sykes and the Arab Bureau that the government needed to 'keep a close watch on the movements, actions and correspondence' of the Central Islamic Society which was a 'a motley gathering of seditious Indians, Egyptians, Nationalists and English and foreign adventurers'.<sup>77</sup> 'Can't Pickthall be muzzled?' queried Clayton of Sykes, although, as has been seen in Chapter Three, he shared Pickthall's concerns regarding Sykes's promotion of Zionism.<sup>78</sup> As Albina put it in his covering letter to Sykes, 'the introduction into Palestine of Jewish rule, or even Jewish predominance, will mean the spoilation of the Arab inhabitants of their hereditary rights'.<sup>79</sup>

The end of 1917 saw Pickthall's position further compromised in the eyes of the Foreign Office when he wrote a letter to the editor of *The Saturday Review* deconstructing 'The Turk Must Go' propaganda efforts so carefully implemented by Sykes and Wellington House. Pickthall's letter was a response to comments in an article in *The Times* of 26 November that 'there has always been foremost in the minds of the Turks a long-standing desire for the total extinction of the Arab race, and hatred and scorn of the Arabs'.<sup>80</sup> On the contrary, wrote Pickthall, 'this is twaddle .... The Turks never had the slightest desire for the extinction of the Arab race. The Arabs of the Hejjâz, retaining their own tribal and feudal systems, were for the greater part of the period of Turkish suzerainty under a loose, and often merely nominal, not a despotic rule'.<sup>81</sup> Far from being an oppressed minority awaiting the loosening of their shackles by their Western liberators, the Sherif and his predecessors 'ranked as high Ottoman officials, and one can fancy that his present Highness must occasionally see in dreams his

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<sup>77</sup> Albina to Sykes, 10 August 1917, HHC DDSY2/11/67.

<sup>78</sup> Clayton to Sykes, 20 August 1917, HHC DDSY2/11/67.

<sup>79</sup> Albina to Sykes, 10 August 1917, HHC DDSY2/11/67.

<sup>80</sup> Marmaduke Pickthall, 'The Revolt of the Arabs: To the Editor of the Saturday Review', *The Saturday Review*, 8 December 1917, p.461.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

pleasant palace on the Bosphorus and the old comfortable days'.<sup>82</sup> In contrast to the Turks, wrote Pickthall, the Arabs of Arabia had always been made up of petty tribal fiefdoms and were neither great civilisers nor devout Muslims:

It is the fashion for the moment to confuse the Arabs of Arabia and the desert with the vast Arabic-speaking populations outside Arabia, in whom the mixture of Arabian blood is very small, who acquired the Arab speech when they embraced Islâm. These (Muslims) were the people who produced the splendid civilisations of Cordova, Cairo, Baghdad, and Damascus. The noble followers of the Prophet became one with them, merging their nationality in their religion, as became true Muslims. The Arabs who remained behind in Arabia soon resumed their ancient habits, their tribal raids and jealousies. All the civilisations which arose to any height in the peninsula were the work of mixed Muslim populations in the plains and cities, protected by the Caliphate against the highland Arabs.<sup>83</sup>

Pickthall's words bear a remarkable resemblance to the pre-war writing of Sykes and Hogarth referred to in Chapters Two and Three. Indeed, Sykes was still writing in this vein into 1915, but whereas Sykes and Hogarth revised their opinions in light of Britain's changing strategy, Pickthall stuck doggedly to the view that authentic Arabs were little better than unscrupulous bandits, far removed from the noble race of nascent nationalists depicted by Sykes and Wellington House in the latter half of the war. In subsequent years Pickthall expressed 'horror' that people would assume that he and T.E. Lawrence had much in common.<sup>84</sup> On the contrary, Pickthall disapproved of Arab nationalism and of Lawrence himself whom he considered self-regarding and entirely disingenuous. 'He was undoubtedly a man of talent in his way', wrote Pickthall grudgingly, 'but it was a way I disliked, and I cannot help regarding the fame he managed to acquire as a popular aberration which the future historian will be quite unable to substantiate on grounds of fact'.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid. The Sherif did indeed live in a palace on the Bosphorus for much of his life and his sons were raised there.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Fremantle, p.264, citing letter, 22 May 1935, recipient not provided.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

Pickthall's letter to *The Saturday Review* went on to attack directly Britain's propaganda efforts with regards to the world's Muslims in a way that must have incensed Sykes and seemed like a personal attack especially at a time when, as has been seen in Chapter Three, he was feeling personally besieged. Pickthall expressed amazement that the details of the Sykes-Picot Agreement had received such wide coverage in the press 'for they show the Allies to have been quite conscienceless in their designs upon an Asiatic Empire, and will rouse the utmost horror in the East'.<sup>86</sup> Further, he drew attention to the government's failure to take advantage of the propagandist opportunities presented by their refusal to remove the caliphate at the behest of Russia, 'with the declaration that it was an affair for Muslims only to decide'.<sup>87</sup> In Pickthall's view effective propaganda would have proclaimed this fact with 'flaring headlines' as it showed an understanding of Islamic practices and a respect for Muslim people.<sup>88</sup> He further outraged Sykes by referring to the Sherif as the government's ally which was fundamentally in contradiction with Sykes's efforts to ensure the revolt appeared as if it were fomented entirely from within.

Pickthall was outside of the secret corridors of political power and did not have in-depth knowledge of Sykes's or Wellington House's machinations. Even so, by delving into an assessment of the government's propagandist efforts and referring to the Sherif as the government's ally he must have known he was treading on dangerous ground. In his own way, Pickthall was as blinkered as Sykes in his belief that Britain's best interests were served by helping the Turks modernise their Asian empire, and his absolute unwillingness to consider alternatives. With his knowledge of the region and of Islam, this made him a very dangerous opponent. The Foreign Office clearly saw his vocal and erudite opposition to

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<sup>86</sup> Pickthall, 'The Revolt of the Arabs', p.461.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. Which, of course, is exactly what the propagandists were trying to do, although badly in Pickthall's view.



their policies, and to their propaganda techniques, as a threat. In a Foreign Office Memorandum Stephen Gaselee and others considered whether Pickthall could be prosecuted under DORA. It was decided that it was inadvisable, not because there was no case to answer, but because the attention that the question of whether or not the Sherif was an ‘ally’ of Britain would receive rendered it undesirable because of the potential effect on Indian Muslim opinion.<sup>89</sup> Instead, Gaselee suggested, ‘a letter of protest from Col. Buchan to Mr Baumann [the editor of *The Saturday Review*] would perhaps best meet the case’.<sup>90</sup>

Sykes, also raised the matter of Pickthall’s letter in his ‘Appreciation of the Attached Eastern Report No. XLVI’, dated 14 December 1917. He acknowledged the power of Pickthall’s comments but sought to dismiss them as tantamount to ‘enemy propaganda’ rather than recognising them as valid and acute criticism of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, and his propagandist strategies. In his typically dramatic fashion, Sykes wrote:

Mr Pickthall has written a letter to the “Saturday Review” ... which is in its way a masterpiece of enemy propaganda. He –

- (a.) Insinuates that our ally King Hussein is a venal traitor.
- (b.) Does his best to set the Arabs at variance.
- (c.) Suggests that we have violated the holy territory by introducing police into Mecca.
- (d.) Goes in for pure Turcophilism.

The editor of the “Saturday Review,” Mr Bauman, might be informed of the ill-effects of such letters; when they reach Egypt and India they are used by our enemies for all they are worth.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Foreign Office Memorandum, 11 December 1917, TNA FO 395/144/235916.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Sykes’s ‘Appreciation of the Attached Eastern Report, No. XLVI, 14 December 1917, TNA FO 395/144/238406.

For Sykes, Pickthall's comments represented the antithesis of the position which he and Wellington House had so carefully sought to cultivate. He must have been livid at Pickthall's trenchant attack on the failures and hypocrisies of his dealings with the Sherif and his propagandist efforts and it was not just he and the Foreign Office who were annoyed. The Secretary of State for India telegraphed the Indian Viceroy, on 15 December, suggesting that it was 'desirable to prevent circulation [of *The Saturday Review*] in India and re-export to Arabia. Foreign Office have sent similar instructions to Cairo'.<sup>92</sup>

Pickthall was rendered further suspect when he announced his conversion to Islam on 29 November 1917 and declared Islam alone to be a progressive religion. 'Pickthall took on the name Muhammad and immediately became one of the pillars of the British Islamic community'.<sup>93</sup> The Muslim community in Britain during the war revolved around the mosque in Woking whose Imam was Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, a barrister and scholar from Lahore who had come to England in 1913 with the object of enlightening the British on the tenets of Islam and making converts.<sup>94</sup> He was 'a powerful personality with much energy and a command of trenchant English .... and gave a coherence previously lacking to British Islam'.<sup>95</sup> Under Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, 'Woking became a social centre of British Islam, an essential port of call for foreign Muslim dignitaries. Visiting Indian princes, in later times the Amir Faisal of Saudi Arabia and the Amir Abdullah of Transjordan, all made their way to the mosque at Woking'.<sup>96</sup> Pickthall was already involved in this community through his championing of the Islamic faith and of the Turkish regime. He had written for the *Islamic Review*

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<sup>92</sup> Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, 15 December 1917, TNA FO 395/144/240173.

<sup>93</sup> Clark, p.39. He was neither the first notable nor the most elevated Briton to convert. In December 1913, the eleventh Baron Headley announced he was a Muslim. In the late nineteenth century, an uncle of Bertrand Russell, Lord Stanley of Alderley had declared his conversion.

<sup>94</sup> The Woking Mosque had been built in 1889 with money from the Maharaja of Bhopal but it had fallen into neglect. It was revitalised by Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din in 1913.

<sup>95</sup> Clark, p.40.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

and *Modern India*, set up by Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, and participated in rallies and lectures. His conversion simply cemented existing ties and enabled him in 1919 to act as Imam when Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din returned to India.

It was perhaps opportune for Pickthall that he was called up in 1918. He had always claimed that he wanted to fight for his country as long as he did not have to fight the Turks and, in fact, he was happy and enjoyed a sense of purpose during his war service.<sup>97</sup> 'For the first time in his life', wrote Anne Fremantle, 'Marmaduke found in England the same feeling of comradeship as he had found in the East'.<sup>98</sup> He became a corporal and was put in charge of an influenza hospital. Despite this, for some reason, he felt that Sykes had developed a personal vendetta towards him. Although neither of his biographers refers to it, Sykes's papers from 1918 contain a letter from Aubrey Herbert to George Lloyd in which he wrote,

I have had a letter from Marmaduke Pickthall, who believes that he is being persecuted by Mark. I don't believe that Mark would consciously persecute any one, but he is fanatical about his own ideas and cannot bear being thwarted. Pickthall says that Mark told the Editor of "The Saturday Review" that he, Pickthall, was a member of the C.U.P., which I think is quite possible .... I hope that you will do what you can to help Marmaduke Pickthall. Men like Cromer and Machell don't give their friendship without some reason. Afterall, Pickthall is a genius at his work ....<sup>99</sup>

George Lloyd must have raised the matter with Sykes as, on 11 July 1918, Sykes wrote to him assuring him that he had not been persecuting Pickthall and had only contacted *The Saturday Review* at the Foreign Office's request regarding

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<sup>97</sup> 'I am no sort of a conscientious objector, though as a man who has to earn the best part of his living by his pen, and far from keen upon one aspect of the present war, I have not enlisted of my own accord'. Letter from Pickthall to Sykes, 26 May 1916, cited in Fremantle, p.272.

<sup>98</sup> Fremantle, p.289.

<sup>99</sup> Herbert to George, undated, TNA FO 800/221/273 (There are some letters between Herbert and Pickthall in the Herbert papers at SHC but not this one). It is only possible to speculate as to the reason why Pickthall felt abused by Sykes. Possibly, the editor of *The Saturday Review* had refused to take any more articles from him. Bearing in mind how close they had come to prosecution and incarceration as traitors this is hardly surprising.

Pickthall's 'disgraceful' articles in that publication. Sykes referred to the fact that Pickthall had now been called up and noted that 'I have had nothing to do with the man for over two years [presumably when Pickthall was agitating for a separate peace with Turkey in 1916] except to urge that he should be well treated if and when he was called up'.<sup>100</sup>

### 4.3 *Beyond the War*

Very soon after the war ended Pickthall produced a satirical novel called *Sir Limpidus* which made clear his disillusionment regarding the Establishment that he had found himself at odds with during the war.<sup>101</sup> As a work of literary merit, *Sir Limpidus* does not stand out, and contemporary critics were restrained in their praise. E.M. Forster considered all Pickthall's novels about England 'bad' whereas on Ottoman Asia he considered him to be 'the only contemporary English novelist who understands the nearer East'.<sup>102</sup> *Sir Limpidus* nevertheless offers the reader valuable insights into the perspective of an astute outsider on the operation of power and position in Edwardian Britain. In addition, it helps further enlighten the researcher on Pickthall's own wartime stance, as well as offering insights into his views on Sykes, who, as will be seen below, bore remarkable similarities to the novel's eponymous hero. Like Sykes, Limpidus is born into an aristocratic family with a large estate whose function 'was to furnish sport to the possessor and his bidden friends'.<sup>103</sup> His father, Sir Rusticus, believes his duty is to bring Limpidus up in 'the good old English way – to ride straight, shoot straight and walk straight. We'll have no crookedness'.<sup>104</sup> Part of this process involved attendance at a famous school. Initially, Limpidus is shocked by what he encounters, which is not what he expected from so elevated

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<sup>100</sup> Sykes to Lloyd, 11 July 1918, TNA FO 800/221/276.

<sup>101</sup> Marmaduke Pickthall, *Sir Limpidus*, (London, 1919).

<sup>102</sup> Forster, *Abinger Harvest*, p.250.

<sup>103</sup> Pickthall, *Sir Limpidus*, p.2.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5 – exactly the type of Anglo-Saxon male Sykes believed made the British Empire a success.

an establishment attended by generations of his family. ‘Blasphemy, foul language, brutality, petty larceny – surely these were not included in the system which his father had so warmly praised’.<sup>105</sup> Pickthall picked out the irony of similarities between the English public school system and the ‘barbaric’ janissary system of the Ottomans:

By wise provision of the early sultans, were Christian children taken from their parents and forcibly converted to another faith, to form a stalwart guard for the existing order, free from all mawkish sentiment and human ties. But the parents of the Janissaries, it is said, objected. The parents of young Limpidus and his compeers disbursed large sums of money in order that their sons might undergo that special treatment.<sup>106</sup>

Pickthall implied that it was not for a scholarly education that families sent their sons to famous public schools:

It was for the rough-and-tumble life, the fun, the hardship, the indelicacy, the rubbing off of eccentricities, that the nobility and gentry sent their sons there; and the snobs sent their sons to meet the sons of the nobility and gentry, to acquire their tone and to become like them the guard of the existing order, free of its court and eligible for its honours.<sup>107</sup>

As Kelly Boyd suggests, school was focused on ‘the creation of a national ruling class defined by birth and money’ and ‘scholarship was derided’.<sup>108</sup> Despite his initial misgivings, Limpidus soon moulds himself into the school product. George Carillion, who performs a similar role to Fenn in *The House of War* as the mouthpiece of many of Pickthall’s own views, comments that Limpidus has ‘acquired the tone and catchwords of this place more perfectly than any other boy I ever met’.<sup>109</sup> In Carillion’s view this marks Limpidus out for a career in politics

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p.22.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p.23.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p.24.

<sup>108</sup> Kelly Boyd, *Manliness and the Boys’ Story Paper in Britain: A Cultural History, 1855-1940* (Basingstoke, 2003), p.15.

<sup>109</sup> Pickthall, *Sir Limpidus*, p.46.

or diplomacy whereas he, Carillion, will never be able to pursue such a career as he cannot ‘play the game’. ‘I can’t keep my sympathies confined to “our own fellows” – I’m always thinking of outsiders. It’s a handicap’.<sup>110</sup> In contrast to the clever and original Carillion, Limpidus is mediocrity incarnate and this mediocrity is the key to his success and popularity at school. ‘The business of a gentleman’, believed Limpidus, ‘was to approve or disapprove, according to the accepted standard of his set’ not to be original or inventive.<sup>111</sup> Limpidus had learned to ‘play the game’, in other words, he had learned the public school code that would distinguish him as a privileged Englishman from those who were not.<sup>112</sup>

By the time Limpidus arrives at Cambridge his conscience has been ‘beaten to a pulp’ and

just as the janissaries of old Turkish sultans imagined that the world belonged to them and behaved accordingly, while posing as the custodians of law and order, so Limpidus looked out on life with a marauder’s eye and deemed that he was born to reap its pleasures, on the understanding that he was a bulwark of his native land.<sup>113</sup>

His unwavering belief in his own superiority is evidenced on his European tour, when Pickthall incisively depicts an encounter with an Italian whom Limpidus has inadvertently insulted. The Italian challenges Limpidus to a duel which, of course, he agrees to without any hesitation. After being wounded in the arm he invites everyone to drink beer and eat sandwiches with him. ‘His friend, who understood Italian, told him they admired his courage, which astonished Limpidus, who had not been afraid, because it never occurred to him as possible

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p.49.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p.54.

<sup>112</sup> See Robert H. MacDonald, *The Language of Empire: Myths and Metaphors of Popular Imperialism, 1880-1918* (Manchester, 1994), p.21, on the public school code and the reference to ‘playing the game’ in Sir Henry Newbolt’s poem, ‘Vita Lampada’.

<sup>113</sup> Pickthall, *Sir Limpidus*, p.57.

that Providence would let a decent Englishman be killed by an Italian monkey'.<sup>114</sup>

Pickthall's description of Limpidus's travels to Egypt and Palestine, reflect his absolute disdain for those travellers who visited solely with the purpose of sport and temporal pleasure, failing entirely to pay attention to the culture, history or people of the regions through which they travelled:

[H]e shot wild duck in sight of famous temples, and quail within the shadow of the pyramids. He bought some Arab ponies, and played polo. Then he went on to Palestine, passed through Jerusalem, and had a shot at wild boar in the Jordan valley; thence on to Asia Minor, where the sport was better, but the conditions much too rough.<sup>115</sup>

In Constantinople, 'he visited a mosque or two, and rode once round the walls. He found the city picturesque but dull, and wondered how the Turks survived without the drink'.<sup>116</sup> Limpidus progresses to Russia, where he is infatuated by the lifestyle he encounters. With the blackest of humour, Pickthall describes how Limpidus is struck by how 'everything was run like clockwork upon proper lines. The people knew their place; they were contented, pious, and respectful. If any rascal tried to agitate them and upset them he was put away'.<sup>117</sup> Reflecting Pickthall's belief in Russian hostility to the Turks as lying at the root of British policy, he described how the gullible Limpidus is convinced by the Russians that the Turk must go and that Russia must have a large slice of the Ottoman Empire. 'I don't dislike the Turk', the Russian nobleman insists to Limpidus, aiming straight at the heart of their shared sensibilities, 'he has the manners of a gentleman. But he's a d----d unsociable fellow, for he doesn't drink'.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p.122.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p.123.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p.125.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p.128.

Like Sykes, Limpidus returns from his travels determined to write a book. 'I've seen some funny places off the beaten track; and, for one thing, very few Englishmen have seen as much as I have of the inner life of Russia'.<sup>119</sup> His book is so boring and unoriginal that he takes the advice of Carillion and gets a ghost writer to help him finish it. Limpidus is certain that when the book is published, 'all the world would know him for a young man to be reckoned with, an intellectual giant of the ruling class'.<sup>120</sup> The book is a success and having established a reputation as a Russophile, as well as author of a well-known book, he is appointed as a junior member of the diplomatic service in St Petersburg just as Sykes was sent to Constantinople. Inevitably, Limpidus soon decides to enter Parliament or, as Pickthall described it, 'the well-kept playground of an ancient game with rules and customs and a hierarchy'.<sup>121</sup> The book Limpidus has written serves him well. In words that could have been addressed directly to Sykes, the head of his party assures Limpidus a great political future:

You are young, but you have written a book of serious import on a subject in which many members of the House are deeply interested. You are the heir to great estates. You have a stake in the country. You are what the House considers as a solid man; and, if you choose, you can rise to almost any height. The House will always listen to a man like you.<sup>122</sup>

The leader of his party also gives him the nod on when to make his maiden speech which Limpidus is told should be upon his 'special subject, Russia, in relation to Great Britain's foreign policy'.<sup>123</sup> Just like Sykes's maiden speech on

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p.129. It is almost as if he has seen Sykes's letter in which he explained to his friend his determination to 'appear' as an Eastern expert (see Chapter Three).

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p.133.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p.156.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p.153-4.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., p.160.



the Ottoman Empire it is well-received, Limpidus's intent being, in typically vacuous fashion, to ensure the speech is 'approved of by everybody'.<sup>124</sup>

Very quickly, Limpidus rises to the position of Cabinet Minister. Carillion ponders on the fact that posts are so often filled with men lacking expertise in their area. This, he opines, is not muddle but self-preservation:

You see the uninitiated think that the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs must be a splendid linguist and a travelled man. As a matter of fact he need not be either. The only important thing is that he should be the type of man who fits into the place assigned to him in the machine .... the man who knows too much, and is too much in earnest, must at all costs be kept out.<sup>125</sup>

This man was, of course, Pickthall himself, banished to oblivion because he was too knowledgeable about the Near East, too empathetic with 'outsiders', too committed to his principles.<sup>126</sup> Limpidus's lack of principle is starkly imagined when he decides to support the women's suffrage movement having long opposed it. Like Sykes's volte face from committed Turcophile to proponent of the dismantlement of the Ottoman Empire, Limpidus is motivated not by right and wrong but by opportunism, because to continue to oppose it was simply to be 'upon the losing side'.<sup>127</sup>

Pickthall's disillusionment with British politics were no doubt partly to blame for his decision to leave England in 1920 and take up a position as editor of the *Bombay Chronicle*, an Indian Nationalist newspaper, although he said that his primary motivation was economic pressure.<sup>128</sup> Between the end of the war and

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p.169.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p.221.

<sup>126</sup> Ironically, and presumably unbeknownst to Pickthall, Sykes himself became increasingly ostracized the more entrenched his views became.

<sup>127</sup> Pickthall, *Sir Limpidus*, p.251.

<sup>128</sup> See Fremantle, p.314. He lived in India until his retirement in 1935. He died in 1936 soon after returning to England.

his departure, he continued to advocate passionately the Turkish cause and did not become more diplomatic in his criticisms of those aspects of British policy he objected to. In 1920, he wrote to Herbert that ‘if a malignant madman with a “down” on England had been put in charge of our “Mohammedan” propaganda during the war, it could not have been more nicely calculated to offend the East’.<sup>129</sup> In the short term, his critics would have declared him wrong. The Empire’s Muslims did not rise against their overlords during the war; if British prestige had slipped, it had been re-established; and, she had positioned herself well to secure post-war influence in the Middle East. In the longer term, however, many of Pickthall’s observations seem startlingly, heartbreakingly, prescient, not least his prediction that the carving up of the region by Western powers would lead to civil strife. For example, writing in 1915, he observed:

Most English pro-Turks, and they are numbered by the hundred thousand, have despaired of the survival of a Turkish Empire. They now would plead for a small, entirely independent Turkish State, with other small, entirely independent Muslim States around it, covering the whole region of the present Asiatic Turkish Empire. The scheme, thus vaguely stated, seems attractive; and it is, perhaps, better than nothing, which is all its authors claim for it. But everyone who knows the lands in question at all intimately, will see difficulties. In the first place, who is to define the boundaries of those several independent States? Where different Powers with diverse interests arrange a boundary line by dint of haggling, the result is apt to be disheartening, as in the case of Albania; where the line was drawn between villages and their own pasture lands, between large mountain districts and their market-towns. And in a land of fighting tribes, that leads to strife. Secondly, the provinces of Asiatic Turkey are none of them inhabited by Christians or by Muslims only. Most of them, indeed, contain a wonderful collection of conflicting creeds and petty nationalities.<sup>130</sup>

Whether he was equally insightful in his belief that only a benign Muslim power could manage the challenges posed by the region’s diversity is a question that cannot be answered but that his rationale reflected a sincere belief in tolerance

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<sup>129</sup> Fremantle, p.311, citing a letter from Pickthall to Herbert, 20 February 1920.

<sup>130</sup> Marmaduke Pickthall, ‘The Fate of Turkey’, *The New Age*, 11 March 1915, XVI, p.503.

and equality as the foundation of successful rule is indubitable. Whilst he believed the Turkish regime represented these values he, nevertheless, shared the opinion of his contemporaries that Western civilisation was more enlightened than ‘Oriental’ civilisation and it was the duty of Western powers to assist Oriental governments on the path to progress in terms of matters such as education and the rule of law. Where he diverged from his contemporaries was in his disapproval of the way in which they used the notions of Oriental and Islamic civilisation interchangeably. To him the two notions were very different. Whereas ‘Oriental’ civilisation, whether practised by Muslim or Christian, was ‘three hundred years, at least, behind’ Western civilisation, the precepts of the Islamic faith as laid down by the Prophet were inherently progressive.<sup>131</sup> Of course, Pickthall’s views were fundamentally undermined by the CUP’s endorsement of the Armenian massacres. But whilst he was wrong in his exculpation of the regime from responsibility, his point regarding Toynbee’s, and others, focus on the fact that the atrocities were being committed by Muslims against Christians was a valid one. For him, this prejudice warranted the label ‘fanaticism’ as much as any actions undertaken by Muslims.

The same rationale led Pickthall to fear the establishment of the League of Nations. Whereas Sykes was one of its original supporters, Pickthall worried about its potential to become an exclusionary institution of Christian nations only. In his view, this would be the antithesis of everything the British Empire stood for. Even after the war, Pickthall considered the British Empire shared greater affinity with the Ottoman Empire than it did with other Christian powers. ‘From the moment it became an empire,’ argued Pickthall, Britain ‘has had more in common with the Muslim Empire than with Byzantium or Spain or Portugal or any technically Christian empire of the past’ as both empires espoused ‘liberty of conscience’ and the tolerance of ‘religious communities other than Christian’.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Marmaduke Pickthall, “‘Defence of the Realm’ in Turkey”, *The New Age*, 4 November 1915, XVIII, p.5.

<sup>132</sup> Pickthall, ‘The League of Nations and the British Empire’, *The New Age*, 3 April 1919, XXIV, p.353.

Pickthall was seemingly as unwavering a Turcophile in 1919 as he had been in 1914. As Clark points out, 'his loyalty to the Committee of Union and Progress outlived the committee' itself.<sup>133</sup> As far as Pickthall was concerned, 'Turkey has never been the villain of the piece at all. The villain of the piece was Czarist Russia, now defunct'.<sup>134</sup>



Pickthall was a patriot and an imperialist, as much convinced of the superiority of Western civilisation as any of his contemporaries. Like T.E. Lawrence, Sykes, Hogarth, Clayton and numerous others, he would no doubt fall within the ambit of imperial historian John MacKenzie's disparaging grouping of those members of a British generation who 'travelled with overweening self-confidence, using the badge of their Britishness as a passport to all kinds of cultural feasts and voyages of self-discovery'.<sup>135</sup> Just like them, Pickthall considered that his experience of the East gave him a unique right to opine on what was right for its future. As Clark observes, 'like them he claimed a special authority as a result of his own particular experience. Like them, this led him to project ethnic stereotypes'.<sup>136</sup> Patronisingly, he thought he knew best what was in Turkish interests, as well as the British Empire's, just as Sykes claimed a special knowledge. What differentiated Pickthall was his conviction that civilisation meant matters such as access to education and justice and was entirely distinct from the question of religion. The fact that the West was largely Christian and the Ottomans were largely Muslim was irrelevant to any assessment of their relative degree of civilisation. Pickthall's scholarly knowledge of Islam had convinced him that it was not a bar to progress. Indeed, it was inherently a

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<sup>133</sup> Clark, p.33.

<sup>134</sup> Marmaduke Pickthall, 'A Survival of Barbarism', *The New Age*, 27 March 1919, XXIV, p.337.

<sup>135</sup> John MacKenzie, 'T.E. Lawrence: The Myth and the Message' in Robert Giddings ed., *Literature and Imperialism* (Basingstoke, 1991), pp.150-181, p.156.

<sup>136</sup> Clark, p.32.

progressive religion when correctly interpreted. Accordingly, the East was just as capable as the West of an advanced degree of civilisation. Britain could better protect her global position by recognising this and fostering the East's own path towards progress than by stepping in and taking control herself. The West's lack of understanding and knowledge of the region, its culture and its religions, could only lead, in the long run, to civil strife and a backlash of hatred against Western powers.

Pickthall was also one of the very few to recognise the subtleties of Wellington House's Eastern propagandist efforts, to critique it and to try to counter it. The relative freedom of the British press enabled him to confront the government's activities in such a way that in 1917 those in the highest authority feared the consequences of his words. The result was censorship in Egypt and India as his comments in relation to the Sykes-Picot Agreement and Britain's alliance with the Sherif were just too close to the bone. Whilst the demise of Turkey's Asian empire proved unstoppable, Pickthall may have taken heart from the fact that, as was seen in Chapter Two, the motif of the 'Clean Fighting Turk' never really disappeared. In a review of Pickthall's 1921 novel, *The Early Hours*, the government's wartime efforts to dispel the image would seem to have entirely passed by *The Saturday Review*'s anonymous reviewer. Far from contradicting Pickthall's belief that 'the Turk is a born gentleman', the reviewer raised the old suggestion that it was the mixed races of the Ottoman Empire that were to blame for Turkish belligerence: 'the Turkish functionary is rarely a pure-blooded Turk, but a mixture of Armenian, Greek, and Georgian, in which the survival of the fittest has often brought into being a singularly able and detestable individual'.<sup>137</sup> Just as in the pre-war days, it was the Levantines, invariably Christian, who were really culpable not the good old Turk. Whilst Wellington House may have been successful in their projection of a revitalised Arab race, their efforts in relation to the Turks were perhaps more transitory.

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<sup>137</sup> *The Saturday Review*, 23 April 1921, p.345.

An established and successful author, a notable Eastern expert, a prolific journalist, a patriot, in many ways Pickthall conformed to the expectations of Edwardian society. Only relentless adherence to his principles stood in the way of potential power and influence. His marginalisation, perceived treachery and personal sense of exclusion and isolation, suggest the extent to which during the war dissent from the government's position was both exceptional and unacceptable. As shall be seen in the next chapter, his fiction, too, marked him out through his efforts to empathise with the voice of the colonised, but, of course, his gravest offence lay in the potential of his journalism to undermine the Empire's prestige by challenging British support of the Arab Revolt and her enmity towards the CUP. As has been seen, these were subjects that lay at the heart of Britain's Ottoman-related propaganda. Pickthall was fortunate indeed that the prospect of unwanted attention precluded his prosecution under DORA.

## Chapter Five – Fiction and Ottoman Asia

Whilst Chapters One, Two and Three focused on state-sponsored activities, it is contended that the activities of the ‘state’ cannot, and should not, be separated from the cultural formation of ideas. The two are synergistic. Whilst on the one hand politicians and propagandists followed an official policy they remained individuals, shaped by ‘a particular set of ideas and cultural concepts, a *mentalité*’.<sup>1</sup> This final substantive chapter will seek to construct further the contemporary cultural reality by examining in greater detail the fictional writing of the period. As Edward Said asserted, narratives were ‘immensely important in the formation of imperial attitudes, references, and experiences’ and, despite their fictitious content, they engaged with real issues and anxieties.<sup>2</sup> This was particularly so in the early twentieth century when much writing was ‘diagnostic’ in nature. As David Trotter observes, ‘a number of writers sought to emulate their heavyweight Victorian predecessors by combining a didactic intention with healthy sales figures’.<sup>3</sup> A loaded novel, purposefully conveying a social or political message, was entirely in keeping with the Edwardians’ literary heritage and, of course, it was from this heritage that Masterman drew when he turned to England’s novelists to provide wartime propaganda.

The chapter will begin with some observations on Edwardian literature relating to the themes of this thesis before turning to an analysis of John Buchan’s novel of 1916, *Greenmantle*.<sup>4</sup> The conjunction of didactic intention and popular fiction is epitomised in Buchan’s wartime novel which is unique in its status as a bestseller with broad and enduring appeal, written by someone integral to the

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<sup>1</sup> Satia, p.12.

<sup>2</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.xii.

<sup>3</sup> Trotter, p.83.

<sup>4</sup> The term ‘Eastern’ is used to capture this fiction but for the purposes of this study the term extends only to lands that had at some point formed part of the Ottoman Empire. Thus parts of N.Africa, including Egypt and Sudan, are included.

government's propaganda work and intimately connected with both military intelligence and Foreign Office policy. In terms of printed material, it can be seen as a consummate example of the amalgamation of official policy and popular culture, and hence, in light of its themes, is a critical source for the purposes of this research. Finally, it will turn to the immediate aftermath of the war touching on its effect on the types of fiction under consideration.

As in the preceding chapters, the intention is to show how Britain's response to the East and its Islamic peoples was not a consequence of a single overriding concern but a reaction to several. Like official propaganda, Eastern fiction sat within an ongoing dialogue regarding the purpose and legitimacy of imperialism that reflected contemporary concerns as well as historic assumptions. Whilst often reliant on stereotypes, it was nevertheless fluid and reactive, responding not only to cultural preoccupations but also, in due course, to the strategic imperatives of the war.

### ***5.1 The attractions of 'Eastern' Fiction***

Edwardian Britons shared a long-standing appetite for exotic Eastern literature that arguably dated from the publication of a French translation of *The Thousand and One Nights* by Antoine Galland in 1704. It was an instant success and galvanised popular interest in the Orient. Galland, and subsequent English translators such as Edward Lane and Richard Burton, appealed to their readers' imaginations but also assured them that their publications had the additional merit of being educational by offering a true and accurate insight into the customs and institutions of Muslims. Norman Daniel asserted that the impact of the *Nights* on European culture cannot be overestimated and the frequent references to it in endless texts, not least those of Sykes, Pickthall and Buchan, support this contention.<sup>5</sup> The cultural *mentalité* of Edwardian Britain, was made

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<sup>5</sup> Norman Daniel, *Islam, Europe and Empire* (Edinburgh, 1966), p.20.



up in part of the *Nights* which, in the nineteenth century, had become a standard work in gentlemen's libraries.<sup>6</sup> Whilst stimulating interest in the East, at the same time the *Nights* emphasised perceived differences between East and West. By creating a mythopoeic East, it encouraged a belief that Muslims were different, physically and culturally, thereby arguably eroding any natural sense of common humanity and facilitating an imperial relation. A mythopoeic East was cemented in the public imagination in work such as Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh* (1817), Morier's *The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan* (1824), and Fitzgerald's English translations of Omar Khayyám's *Rubáiyát*. A number of historians see James Elroy Flecker's poetic play *Hassan: The Story of Hassan of Bagdad and How He Came to Make the Golden Journey to Samarkand* (written between 1913 and 1914 but published posthumously in 1922) as the summation of this tradition.<sup>7</sup> Flecker, another young Oxford graduate, and member of the Levant Consular Service, was inspired to write *Hassan* after reading a French translation of the *Nights* and by his travels in the Ottoman Empire between 1910 and 1914.<sup>8</sup> His vivid depiction of a magical, picture-book East captured the imagination of London's theatrical producers and led to *Hassan's* performance on the London stage in 1923 (see below).

Like the *Nights*, Eastern fiction at the end of the long nineteenth century fed an enduring appetite for escapist entertainment. Often formulaic in structure, it fitted the template that historian, Reeva Spector Simon, describes of books that have 'emotional appeal and fill the need for vicarious experience and the desire to escape from reality into a more exciting life: sexual fantasy and sudden wealth, interaction with other cultures, victory over great and unconquerable

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<sup>6</sup> According to Irwin, by the late nineteenth century the *Nights* was no longer part of the common literary culture of adults, but remained an important book for children, although in an expurgated version (see Irwin, *The Arabian Nights*, Chapter 10).

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Daniel, *Islam, Europe and Empire* and Gavin Hambly, 'Muslims in English-language fiction' in Robin W. Winks and James R. Rush eds., *Asia in Western Fiction*, pp.35-52.

<sup>8</sup> C.E. Bosworth, 'James Elroy Flecker: Poet, Diplomat, Orientalist', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 1987 69(2), p.359-378, p.374.

odds ...'.<sup>9</sup> The East offered the perfect escape route as the antithesis of the 'overpowering ugliness of the Victorian industrial landscape and the appalling conditions in which most people lived'.<sup>10</sup> The contrast between Syria and London presented by Pickthall in *Saïd the Fisherman* aptly illustrates this point.

Whilst Edwardians may have sought an escape from their domestic lives, the historian Mary Hammond, a specialist in reading tastes and publishing during the early twentieth century, argues that in some respects they viewed 'Victorianism as a simpler age if not a golden one' and harked back nostalgically to the greater certainties of those times.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, the 'popular novel once more 'worlding' in the (often sexually) untamed spaces of Africa [and Arabia?]' was much in demand, although, it is argued here that, whilst there was an ongoing appetite for imperial settings, the complexities and uncertainties of the new century were nevertheless embedded in the fiction of the period.<sup>12</sup> Samuel Hynes, in *The Edwardian Turn of Mind*, cites Charles Masterman who, before the war, had been the literary editor of a daily paper, and observed of Edwardian literature that it was 'at war with civilisation'.<sup>13</sup> D.G. Hogarth, future head of the Arab Bureau, articulated the concern when he observed, 'our civilization has grown so complex that a long dormant instinct of revolt is awake. The individual, chafing under his burden of social observance, wants to return, for however short a time, to more primitive life and feel his self-sufficiency'.<sup>14</sup> Fiction with an Eastern theme provided a backdrop for a dialectic exploring the meaning, purpose and direction of Western civilisation.

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<sup>9</sup> Reeve Spector Simon, *Spies and Holy Wars, The Middle East in 20th-Century Crime Fiction* (Austin Texas, 2010), p.8.

<sup>10</sup> Hambly, p.48, citing an article by Bernard Knox on the Victorian passion for Hellenism in the *New York Review of Books*, 11 June 1981.

<sup>11</sup> Hammond, p.157.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind* (Princeton, 1968), p.71.

<sup>14</sup> Satia, p.67, citing Hogarth in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 1905.

As well as providing a context for discourse on progress and civilisation, the Middle East was seen by academics, explorers and Orientalists as one of the few regions of the world yet to be fully understood, explored, or indeed, conquered. As Priya Satia, argues, the numerous travelers and scholars who gravitated towards the region were part of a cultural industry that fulfilled an appetite at home for information on the region, an appetite she refers to as a ‘literary cult of the desert’.<sup>15</sup> It was a topic of interest not only because of its untapped potential but because of the religious significance of the Holy Land and because of fears that due to modern developments such as the Young Turk revolution and the construction of the Baghdad Railway, it was a land whose historic integrity would soon disappear. Figures such as Gertrude Bell, David Hogarth, T.E. Lawrence, Aubrey Herbert, not to mention Sykes and Pickthall, travelled there either with the intention of becoming writers or with the idea that going there was primarily of literary interest. Intimately connected with the mainstream of Edwardian society via their social and political connections, these figures helped shape cultural norms.

As touched upon elsewhere, another element of the Edwardian *mentalité* was the perceived spiritual crisis. Just as in the eighteenth century when the mythical East had seemingly offered an alternative to rationalism, so in the early twentieth century some saw it as an antidote to an existential crisis brought about by progress and modernity.<sup>16</sup> Thus many of the protagonists of Eastern-based fiction from this period were there because they were in search of a spiritual identity. One such example is the heroine in Robert Hichens’ hugely popular 1904 novel, *The Garden of Allah*, who, on arriving within the ‘huge spaces’ of the Sahara, heard ‘the footsteps of freedom treading towards the south .... [and] all her dull perplexities, all her bitterness of *ennui*, all her questionings and

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p.130.

<sup>16</sup> Ironically, it could be construed as the geographical equivalent of Nietzsche’s *Übermensch* so reviled by Wellington House’s propagandists but whose ‘barbaric simplicity and raw power’ was attractive to those who believed in the degenerative effects of progress on civilisation. It is no wonder that T.E. Lawrence professed himself a fan of Nietzsche before the war.

doubts, were swept away on the keen desert wind into the endless plains'.<sup>17</sup> The East offered both a physical and a cultural reductionism perceived to be long gone from the 'narrow, crowded world' of Western Europe.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, the East had a redemptive purity when contrasted with the West, besmirched as it was by commercialism and modernity. This viewpoint is apparent in the many contrasts between Eastern landscapes and London scenes. As Hichens' heroine puts it, 'surely it was difficult to be clean of soul' in the 'desperate dirt of London mornings'.<sup>19</sup>

This was not the literature of high culture, dense and layered with meaning, like Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness' or Woolf's *The Village in the Jungle* (both masterly explorations of the tension between civilisation and nature, between imperialists and the colonised, and set in Africa and Sri Lanka respectively), nor was it the most crude and naive style of imperial story telling as represented, for example, in the work of Edgar Wallace or Cutcliffe Hyne, and later in the 'pulp orientalism' of Sax Rohmer.<sup>20</sup> In general, like Pickthall's novels, this Eastern fiction lay somewhere in the middle. These were 'books of the hour' and were concerned with imperialism, and Britain's role as an imperial power, but not necessarily via the straightforward retelling of imperial adventure stories. Reflecting the preoccupations of the era, such novels looked beyond conquest to the complexities and practicalities of the imperial relationship. Whilst many of the vestiges of the traditional imperial adventure story remained in terms, for example, of the upright British hero, or the travails of an inhospitable climate, they often strove to engage with the contemporary dialectic concerning the morality and legitimacy of imperialism. Like Pickthall, many novelists had visited the region and formed their opinions firsthand. Unlike Pickthall, their

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<sup>17</sup> Robert Hichens, *The Garden of Allah* (London, 1904), p.29. It ran through five editions within three months and was filmed three times.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p.46.

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Conrad, 'Heart of Darkness', serialized in *Blackwood's Magazine* (1899) and Leonard Woolf, *The Village in the Jungle* (London, 1913).

work was largely introspective, approaching the subject from the experience and anxieties of the imperialists not the colonised. As Zachary Lockman points out, the public appetite was for the fantasy of the East and there was ‘relatively little interest in how the indigenous inhabitants of these lands actually lived, what they thought, or how they saw the world’.<sup>21</sup>

With the exception of Pickthall’s work perhaps, such novels were not written for the intelligentsia but the ‘masses’ or the ‘herd’, to use two of Mary Hammond’s terms.<sup>22</sup> Historically, this has led some literary critics, notably Edward Said, to dismiss such popular literature as irrelevant, or, at least, as lacking cultural validity for the purposes of historical analysis but, as Hammond warns, it is important to acknowledge the ‘slipperiness of generic definitions’ because of the closeness and interdependence of popular and literary fiction.<sup>23</sup> Although these books were neither classic works of literature nor written for the intellectual élite, one cannot assume the identity of the readership or the influence (or lack of influence) of one genre over another. The Orientalist scholar, and trenchant critic of Said, Robert Irwin, has highlighted the dangers of Said’s own ‘over-interpretation of selected works from the canon of high literature’ which he argues is both misleading and shortsighted.<sup>24</sup> In Irwin’s view ‘it is unsafe to assume that wider attitudes to the Orient were shaped by the intellectual elite in some kind of trickle-down effect’.<sup>25</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, which is concerned with the themes and not the quality of the fiction, it is asserted that popular fiction has just as great a claim to being historical source material as does literary fiction, and its commercial success confirms it as a rich source for the illumination of current ideas and attitudes within British society.

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<sup>21</sup> Lockman, p.70.

<sup>22</sup> See Hammond, p.5.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p.7. In *Culture and Imperialism* Said restricted his review to those novels and books he considered ‘estimable and admirable works of art and learning’ (p.xv).

<sup>24</sup> Robert Irwin, ‘Popular Culture, Orientalism, and Edward Said’, *Middle East Institute Viewpoints*, 12 (September 2009) at [www.mei.edu](http://www.mei.edu) (accessed: 30/06/2015).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

## 5.2 *The Themes of Edwardian Eastern Fiction*

An appropriate place to start is with the atrocity narratives of the 1890s generated on the back of the Mahdist uprising in Sudan in the 1880s and 1890s as they (building on the Indian Mutiny of 1857 and the Bulgarian atrocities of the 1870s) signified a shift in popular attitudes whereby the notion of the barbarous Oriental was given a definitively Islamic flavour, when the articulation of Islam as a ‘menace’, as ‘fanatical’ and resistant to the West’s civilising efforts, solidified. Although ostensibly non-fiction, the borderline between fact and fiction was imprecisely drawn in these works whose purpose was essentially to entertain and satisfy a voracious appetite for sensationalist atrocity accounts. Of primary importance in creating the idea of the Mahdiyya as the epitome of Islamic brutality and fanaticism was the work of Reginald Wingate, Director of Intelligence for the Egyptian Army and subsequent High Commissioner and protagonist in the creation of Eastern-related propaganda during the war. In the 1890s he produced three accounts, including two captivity narratives, depicting life in the Sudan under the Mahdiyya as mired in debauchery, cruelty and primitivism.<sup>26</sup> In the words of explorer Henry Stanley, Wingate’s account of the captivity of Father Ohrwalder, *Ten Years’ Captivity*, was ‘one of the most terrible of books; for its powerful way of leaving impressions on the mind ... of “Death, Dead Bones, Desolation”’.<sup>27</sup> Whilst Wingate’s work on Ohrwalder was a modest commercial success, his 1896 account of the captivity and escape of Rudolph von Slatin, *Fire and Sword in the Sudan*, was a bestseller. By 1898 it had, according to its publisher, Edward Arnold, become a ‘standard work’ and had ‘found its way into every Library’ in Britain.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Reginald Wingate, *Mahdism and the Egyptian Sudan* (London, 1891), Reginald Wingate *Ten Years’ Captivity in the Mahdi’s Camp* (London, 1892), and Rudolph C. Slatin, *Fire and Sword in the Sudan* (London, 1896).

<sup>27</sup> Stanley to Marston, 25 October 1892, SAD, Wingate papers, Box 230/5/28.

<sup>28</sup> Arnold to Slatin, 23 November 1898, SAD, Wingate Papers, Box 432/80/3.

As the title implies, *Fire and Sword* was a sensationalist and lurid tale of war and adventure. Full of battles, political intrigue, accounts of suffering, imprisonment and torture, it was a perfect fit with the juvenile literature produced by Henty, Stevenson, and others, as well as with many of the motifs of the *Nights* (particularly Burton's translation). In keeping with High Victorian imperial ideology, the enemy was not another Western race, but an uncivilised Oriental race whose vices were depicted in prurient detail, satisfying not only the readers' salacious interests but also fuelling the conceptual culture of British imperialism whereby the inadequacies of less progressive peoples could be held up in contrast to Western civilisation thereby justifying British intervention. Another writer, and a subsequent recruit to the wartime propaganda effort, captivated by the idea of the wild, Islamic fundamentalists of Sudan was Arthur Conan Doyle, who penned *The Tragedy of the Korosko* in 1898.<sup>29</sup> Set in 1895 when the Mahdiyya was still at large, it tells the story of a group of spoilt Western tourists who undergo a life-changing experience when they are kidnapped by the Mahdists whilst holidaying on the Nile. Like Wingate, Conan Doyle capitalised on the public's interest in sensationalist, voyeuristic literature where Western characters fall victim to the debauchery and fanaticism of Islamic extremists. Some of the party are killed, all of them suffer from privations and their captors' cruelty, whilst the threat of joining the Khalifa's harem hangs over the women throughout.

Whilst the work of all novelists of this period was arguably 'imbued with, if not animated by, an awareness that a vast portion of the earth's surface was subject to Britain', those who engaged with British involvement in the Middle East approached the subject more directly.<sup>30</sup> Having recently worked in Egypt and witnessed the British administration at close quarters, Conan Doyle was, like Pickthall, a supporter of the regime and contributed to the ongoing debate

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<sup>29</sup> Arthur Conan Doyle, *A Desert Drama: Being the Tragedy of the Korosko* (Philadelphia, 1898). A.E.W. Mason's well-known novel, *The Four Feathers*, is also about the Sudanese conflict.

<sup>30</sup> Boehmer, *Migrant Metaphors*, p.24.

regarding the morality of Britain's occupation of Egypt. Indeed, in the opinion of Norman Daniel, Conan Doyle's book was nothing less than a tour de force, 'so completely are the bones of the imperial expectations of 1898 laid bare' for the subsequent delectation of the historian.<sup>31</sup> Conan Doyle used the character of a cynical Frenchman to voice the view that the occupation was entirely self-serving. In contrast, two Englishmen, a retired colonel and a young diplomat, articulate the British position. The diplomat bemoans Britain's self-sacrificing approach to the world whereby she, still the world's prevailing superpower, continues to play the role of global policeman:

Now we police the land for Dervishes and brigands and every sort of danger to civilisation .... If a Kurd breaks loose in Asia Minor, the world wants to know why Great Britain does not keep him in order. If there is a military mutiny in Egypt, or a Jihad in the Soudan, it is still Great Britain who has to set it right .... We get hard knocks and no thanks, and why should we do it? Let Europe do its own dirty work.<sup>32</sup>

Colonel Cochrane responds that it is a nation's duty to further the principles of civilisation and, like a good soldier, Britain 'is often called upon to carry out what is unpleasant and unprofitable; but if it is obviously right, it is mere shirking not to undertake it'.<sup>33</sup>

Whereas Britain was striving to bring progress to less enlightened races, Conan Doyle depicted the Arabs as monolithic, unchanged for centuries. 'In all save the rifles in their hands', described Conan Doyle, 'there was nothing to distinguish these men from the desert warriors who first carried the crescent flag out of Arabia'.<sup>34</sup> Whilst their primitivism was a source of marvel, their fanaticism was to be feared. As Colonel Cochrane declares 'there is no iconoclast in the world

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<sup>31</sup> Daniel, p.443.

<sup>32</sup> Conan Doyle, p.46.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p.47.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p.95



like an extreme Mohammedan'.<sup>35</sup> Despite the perceived threat of Islamic fanaticism, Conan Doyle, like Sykes, Lawrence and numerous others, was fascinated by the self-negating, existential appeal of the desert as well as by the intoxicating power of Islam as a source of motivation and a uniting force amongst men. Both represented the antithesis of modern, Western society, so complex, self-regarding, and rational. Describing the Arabs' prayer ritual, Conan Doyle observed:

The great red sun was down with half its disc slipped behind the violet bank upon the horizon. It was the hour of Arab prayer .... And how they prayed, these fanatical Moslems! Wrapt, absorbed, with yearning eyes and shining faces, rising, stooping, grovelling with their foreheads upon their praying carpets. Who could doubt, as he watched their strenuous, heart-whole devotion, that here was a great living power in the world, reactionary but tremendous, countless millions all thinking as one from Cape Juby to the confines of China? Let a common wave pass over them, let a great soldier or organiser arise among them to use the grand material at his hand, and who shall say that this may not be the besom with which Providence may sweep the rotten, decadent, impossible, halfhearted south of Europe, as it did a thousand years ago, until it makes room for a sounder stock?<sup>36</sup>

In Islam and the desert lay possible answers to the Edwardian spiritual crisis but its power also highlighted the Empire's fragility. Perhaps there was also something about the region and its history that emphasised the ephemerality of imperial control. Writing in 1914, another Wellington House propagandist, William Le Queux, reflected in his novel, *The Hand of Allah*, upon its transitoriness when he contemplated the 'bare, barren site of what was once the greatest city in the world: Thebes' but which was now swallowed up by sand.<sup>37</sup> Just as 'Thebes rose, became the greatest city in the world, and then fell, just as our own London has risen to magnificence and world-power – and will most assuredly fall'.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p.44.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p.142-3.

<sup>37</sup> William Le Queux, *The Hand of Allah* (London, 1914), p.86.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

As mentioned above, Conan Doyle contributed to the dialectic regarding the British occupation of Egypt. This was a common theme. Marmaduke Pickthall defended the regime in his 1908 novel, *The Children of the Nile*, and, as discussed in the preceding chapter, Hall Caine's damning, and controversial account, *The White Prophet*, was published in 1909. A riposte to Hall Caine's work was written by Douglas Sladen in 1909, *The Tragedy of the Pyramids*, in which Sladen, like Pickthall, implied that strong British rule was appropriate for Egypt.<sup>39</sup> Percy White wrote another popular book on the subject in 1914, *Cairo*, which was reissued in 1919.<sup>40</sup> Gilbert Parker, the prominent Wellington House figure, also wrote Egyptian tales, notably *The Weavers* in 1907.<sup>41</sup> Set before the British occupation, Parker depicted Ottoman rule as violent and exploitative but the Muslim subjects themselves were, when not subject to fanaticism, benign and devout. As one character puts it, in Egypt 'the people are all right and the Government all wrong'.<sup>42</sup> Opprobrium was reserved principally for the Levantines, those 'cormorant usurers – Greeks, Armenians, and Syrians, a hideous salvage corps, who saved the house of a man that they might at last walk off with his shirt and the cloth under which he was carried to his grave'.<sup>43</sup> Nahoum Pasha, an Armenian and the novel's chief antagonist, 'Christian though he was', was nevertheless, 'Oriental to his furthest corner, and had the culture of a French savant. He had also the primitive view of life, and the morals of a race who, in the clash of East and West, set against Western character and directness and loyalty'.<sup>44</sup> It is up to Parker's protagonist, a young, idealistic Quaker, bearing a remarkable similarity to General Gordon in his earnest idealism and saintliness, to bring justice and fair play to the Khedive's court.

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<sup>39</sup> Douglas Sladen, *The Tragedy of the Pyramids* (London, 1909).

<sup>40</sup> Percy White, *Cairo* (London, 1919).

<sup>41</sup> Gilbert Parker, *The Weavers* (London, 1907).

<sup>42</sup> Parker, *The Weavers*, p.54.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p.47.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p.61.

The vilification of Orientals who embraced Western influences extended to Muslims. Thus in *Cairo*, the English hero's antagonist is an Oxford educated Egyptian, Sayed Bey, whose English education is seen as a veneer behind which lies his real, Eastern character:

He was, he boasted, a Mohammedan much as his "advanced" European acquaintances were Christians – that is to say, agnostically. Yet he was as ready to believe in witchcraft as to quote Huxley .... In spite, therefore of Oxford and England, of London and Paris, his culture was but a thin veneer that fell off in flakes whenever shaken.<sup>45</sup>

The villain in Le Queux's *The Hand of Allah* is also an Oxford educated Egyptian, Ahmed Amim. He is 'broad-shouldered, well-set-up and athletic, with a dark, refined face and intense black eyes'.<sup>46</sup> Like *Cairo*'s Sayed Bey, Ahmed Amim has the veneer of a 'refined, polite Egyptian gentleman' but in private 'his habits were those of the low-class native. At night he would slink into the ill-lit slums of Cairo and smoke hasheesh in the lowest of the Arab cafés'.<sup>47</sup>

The views expressed by authors such as Le Queux and White reflected a contemporary dialogue regarding the benefits of bestowing a Western education on the colonised (a subject that animated Sykes, as has been seen in Chapter Three). For many, liberal education policies, far from strengthening ties between colonised and coloniser, were seen as having the opposite effect. As a character in Hall Caine's *The White Prophet* pithily puts it, 'Teach your dog to snap and he'll soon bite you'.<sup>48</sup> More broadly, it was commonly believed that adulteration of castes and societies inevitably led to bad results. Such superficially civilised Muslims as Ahmed Amim and Sayed Bey posed a particular danger to white

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<sup>45</sup> White, p.130-1.

<sup>46</sup> Le Queux, p.22.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p.95.

<sup>48</sup> Hall Caine, p.13.

women. Le Queux's Ahmed Amim charms the ladies of London Society with his civilised exterior and underlying animal magnetism and power. At a London soirée 'no man was so sought after ... by the other sex as the tall, grinning, brown-faced personage in the red fez'.<sup>49</sup> 'Women adored him. His soft, quaint English sounded to them musical and pretty, his manners were charming, and his refined tact and delicacy, combined with his enormous wealth, appealed to them'.<sup>50</sup> In Le Queux's opinion the 'Mohammedan' was frequently attractive to women and he put this down to 'the romance which surrounds [them]'.<sup>51</sup> The aura of romance was undoubtedly bound up with the mystique of the *Nights*. Thus one of Amim Bey's attractions was 'his splendid palace – a veritable Aladdin's palace – at Heliopolis'.<sup>52</sup>

Amim is not a figure to be mocked or patronised in Le Queux's story. He is fearsome and threatening. A danger to the government, to the Empire, to the purity of white women. He has the guile, the strength, the money and the motive to beat them at their own game. He holds the English heroine, Marjorie, in his thrall like 'a crushed butterfly in the hollow of his hand'.<sup>53</sup> This is not the dimwitted, primitive savage of earlier imperial literature. On the contrary, Amim is a force to be reckoned with. He is adept at espionage and has contacts and spies all over the West. In this, explained Le Queux, he was 'only following the habit of certain great [Jewish?] European and American financiers'.<sup>54</sup> Here was a figure who 'more than one [English] man' envied for his 'influence, his position, and his success with the opposite sex'.<sup>55</sup> Of course, there were still those who

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<sup>49</sup> Le Queux, p.265.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p.261.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. Or maybe it was just his money ...

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p.269.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p.300.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p.263.

were 'disgusted' by Amim, who 'hated the taint of the black blood'.<sup>56</sup> And yet, it is only in the final denouement that Le Queux reduces him to an imperial stereotype, easily outmanoeuvred by his English love rival and losing all self-possession when he is arrested for murder, leaving the English protagonists to live happily ever after on the banks of the Nile, benign imperial benefactors.<sup>57</sup>

Amim represents the destabilisation of imperial assumptions and yet, as Diamond points out liaisons between Orientals and Anglo-Saxon women invariably remained unfulfilled in pre-war fiction.<sup>58</sup> According to historian, Robert MacDonald, this taboo on interracial relations and disapproval of miscegenation was a deeply held sexual response to a fear of the 'other' as a body who held the potential to contaminate and weaken.<sup>59</sup> Certainly, as has already been discussed, the idea of degeneration, both cultural and biological, was a prevailing fear in Edwardian Britain and, as David Trotter has noted, was evident in numerous fictional representations, such as Mr Hyde, Moriarty, Count Dracula, Quint and Miss Jessel, and the picture of Dorian Gray, not to mention Kurtz's 'abominations' in 'Heart of Darkness'.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, Boehmer identifies in Conrad an implication that, far from being different and separate, inside the European imperialists dwelt a primitive 'other' threatening to expose the fraudulent premise of the project of European expansion.<sup>61</sup>

In order for a happy ending in a romance between an Oriental and an Anglo-Saxon woman it would have to transpire that the original racial classification was a mistake, for example, because unbeknown to everyone the character was adopted as a child. Where the character was unequivocally Oriental, the

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p.264.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p.339-340.

<sup>58</sup> Diamond, p.6.

<sup>59</sup> MacDonald, *The Language of Empire*, p.35.

<sup>60</sup> See Trotter, p.197.

<sup>61</sup> Boehmer, *Migrant Metaphors*, p.59.

response of the morally sound female protagonist was similarly unequivocal, as, for example, in the case of Hall Caine's pro-nationalist *The White Prophet*. Whilst he may have bucked the trend so far as his politics were concerned, Hall Caine was assiduous in ensuring that the physical feelings of the heroine, Helena, for the eponymous Muslim were in careful accordance with prevailing mores. Generically, women may have been susceptible to the charms of powerful Orientals, but the heroines of these novels were able to see through the civilised veneer to the barbarism beneath. Thus, Helena describes how the close proximity of the White Prophet made her skin creep and gave her 'a feeling which I had never known before – a feeling of repulsion – the feeling of the white woman about the black man'.<sup>62</sup>

'Let the White go to the White and the Black to the Black', advised Rudyard Kipling.<sup>63</sup> Dire consequences were the inevitable result of sexual relations between English men and native women according to even the most insightful of colonial observers (see, for example, Kipling's tale 'Without Benefit of Clergy' and Woolf's 'A Tale Told by Moonlight').<sup>64</sup> Of course, India was the context in which the taboo on sex between the colonised and their British imperial masters had arisen but it is notable that of the novels reviewed in this section and set in Ottoman Asia none contains a narrative where Western male protagonists and Muslim women have meaningful relations. Here, the idea of the Orient as a place demarcated by the West as overwhelming 'feminine' can usefully be considered. If India was a feminised Oriental 'other', supine and languid, the lands of Ottoman Asia were arguably perceived as less torpid and hence more masculine. It was a region where the parameters of the imperial embrace were less certain and this may account for the prevalence of virile, threatening Muslim characters who pose a risk to the English heroine, metonymically associated with

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<sup>62</sup> Hall Caine, p.441.

<sup>63</sup> Rudyard Kipling, 'Beyond the Pale', *Plain Tales from the Raj* (Calcutta, 1889), p.167.

<sup>64</sup> Rudyard Kipling, *Life's Handicap* (London, 1891) and Leonard Woolf, *Stories of the East* (Richmond, 1921).

the Empire. Indeed, even Eastern women could be perceived as minacious. In *The Garden of Allah*, Hichens vividly describes three dancing girls emerging from the desert dunes as embodying the ‘otherness’ of the East, an inalienably foreign and primitive place:

On their heads, piled high with gorgeous handkerchiefs, were golden crowns which glittered in the sun-rays, and tufts of scarlet feathers. Their oval faces, covered with paint, were partially concealed by long strings of gold coins, which flowed from their crowns down over their large breasts and disappeared towards their waists .... Their dresses were of scarlet, apple-green and purple silks, partially covered by floating shawls of spangled muslin .... Their hands, which they held high, gesticulating above the crest of the dune, were painted blood red.<sup>65</sup>

These women are vital, sexual, timeless. Their primitivism repels whilst it simultaneously appeals to a thirst for an energy and vigour perceived as diminished in the West. For the English heroines of these novels the East was frequently as invigorating an experience as it was for the men. For example, Kathlyn Rhodes, author of a number of books set in Egypt, depicted it as a place of romance and adventure, where, away from the constraints of civilised life, Western women could live more freely and give way to their passions.<sup>66</sup> Strong, intelligent, independent English women feature in numerous books including Hichens’ *The Garden of Allah*, Hall Caine’s *The White Prophet* and Le Queux’s *The Hand of Allah*.

Whilst these books undoubtedly reflected prevailing contemporary concerns, their structure was usually formulaic.<sup>67</sup> The East was a place of adventure for Englishmen and women of a brave and noble disposition where they might encounter horrors and privations far removed from the safety of home but also experience the exoticism and mystique of a fictional East encapsulated by the

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<sup>65</sup> Hichens, p.383.

<sup>66</sup> See, for example, Kathlyn Rhodes, *The Desert Dreamers* (London, 1909).

<sup>67</sup> See John G. Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (Chicago, 1976), Chapter 1.

*Nights*. Morality was clearly defined in accordance with prevailing cultural standards, thus there was no ambit for interracial romance. In its crudest form, this formula was to be found in the juvenile literature of the period produced by novelists such as Rider Haggard, Henty and Kingston, and publications such as the *Boy's Own Paper*, where the world was depicted, in the words of John MacKenzie, 'as a vast adventure playground in which Anglo-Saxon superiority could be repeatedly demonstrated *vis-à-vis* all other races, most of whom were depicted as treacherous and evil'.<sup>68</sup> Britain's imperial psyche and the cultural construction of masculinity in the late Victorian and Edwardian era were closely linked and yet, Kelly Boyd, an expert on the *Boy's Own* phenomenon, observes that the turn of the century witnessed a shift in the depiction of the archetypal Anglo-Saxon hero. In the last decades of the nineteenth century he was arrogant, mastered those around him and pursued his own aggressively individualistic path. In contrast, the Edwardian hero was a more socially aware creation with a 'less assured hold on masculinity'.<sup>69</sup> Boyd attributes this to a recognition of a need for administrators and team workers instead of conquerors but it is arguable that even here, in the least subtle form of imperial story-telling, such transformations were also a reaction to the anxieties already discussed, such as increasing self-consciousness regarding Britain's aggressive imperialism and tremulousness about shifting trends in society not least in terms of the virility of Anglo-Saxon stock which had been so proudly and unquestioningly represented in earlier days.

In conclusion, a number of trends already referred to in this thesis can be identified in these Edwardian era novels. Concerns regarding the Empire's future, its legitimacy, fears of pan-Islamism, the cost of progress, the degeneracy of British stock and, not least, the depiction of the Oriental 'other' as a sometime fascinating exotic and a sometime repellent threat are all evident. Worthy of

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<sup>68</sup> MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p.204.

<sup>69</sup> Boyd, p.71.



particular disgust was the Oriental, whether Christian or Muslim, tainted by Western influence. Traditional Islam, met with approval, often with awe or fear, but adulterated Muslims were met solely with disdain. Whether this was because they lacked the raw power of ‘true believers’ or could be patronisingly viewed as aspirational Europeans or because of, as Pickthall put it, the fear of unleashing a ‘Frankenstein’s monster’ on the Western world, are all conceivable explanations for this. This was a period before the ‘Hun’ had become the all-pervasive ‘other’ against which Britons compared themselves and against whom they were to be judged. But by 1915, when, as has been seen in Chapter One, there was little room for another ‘other’ as well as the Hun, the popular Eastern novel of the pre-war era had all but disappeared.

### ***5.3 Greenmantle***

Fictional stories set in Ottoman Asia, so abundant during the Edwardian era, dried up once the war started. The trend evidenced in the analysis of Wellington House’s output for 1915 appears to be mirrored more broadly in the publishing world. As identified in Chapters One and Two, there was neither official interest in, nor a public appetite for, reading material that extended far beyond the geographical immediacies of the war. Indeed, some historians have identified the war as precipitating a creative dearth in the world of fiction. In the words of the late Peter Firchow:

A mental slum, like a slum in a city, soon tends to grow monotonous. The buildings assume a drab sameness and the individuals merge into a shabby, demoralized, and somewhat threatening mass. So too with the thousands of pages of explanation and justification, attack and counterattack, produced by politicians, professors, journalists, historians, and propagandistic men and women of every description, public and private, during the Great War.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Firchow, p.100

This somewhat dramatic interpretation identifies correctly the obsession with ‘explanation and justification, attack and counterattack’ highlighted earlier in this thesis, and as the vast majority of leading writers of the era were called upon by Wellington House, it seems compelling. The war engulfed them intellectually, morally and spiritually, as well as practically. A further challenge to literary endeavour was posed by the nature of modern warfare. Trench fighting was certainly not the stuff of romance and adventure familiar to readers of Parker, Hichens and Hall Caine. Kelly Boyd pinpoints the problem when she observes, in relation to the *Boy's Own* papers, that war stories set in the Boer War were much more prevalent than Great War stories ‘probably due to the particular problems of finding heroic stories in trench warfare’.<sup>71</sup> She goes on to suggest that, ‘by the end of 1916 most papers had abandoned the pretense of setting stories in the services or at the front. Letters from the trenches disappeared. The majority of the stories in the papers returned to the themes of pre-war publications. Sport, school and detective fiction retained a central place in the magazines’.<sup>72</sup>

The difficulties of making the war exciting and romantic for consumers of popular fiction was as much a problem for the writers of adult fiction as it was for the juvenile papers and John Buchan would have been more aware of this than most both as a novelist and as author of the serialised history of the war as it occurred, commissioned by Nelson.<sup>73</sup> Buchan was little known as a novelist at the war's outbreak and was not one of the writers Masterman called to Wellington House in September 1914. His public profile increased early in the war thanks to his work for Nelson (and the exposure this and his social

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<sup>71</sup> Boyd, p.94. Hynes, however, identifies several formulaic war adventure novels of a *Boy's Own* style set in the trenches by F.S. Brereton and Escott Lynn (Hynes, *A War Imagined*, p.44).

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p.98. Boyd argues that only with the creation of *Biggles* in 1932 did the war feature once more.

<sup>73</sup> Initially planned to appear in fortnightly parts (as time went on, the intervals grew longer) of about 50,000 words, *Nelson's History of the War* was intended ‘partly to perform a public service, partly to ensure a steady flow of work for [Nelson's] machines’ (Janet Adam Smith, *John Buchan* (London, 1965), p.193). Buchan, too old to enlist, took charge of the project, undertaking the work on a pro bono basis but, in the process, gaining significant public exposure. Thus in May 1915 he was one of only five journalists attached to the British army and invited to report on its behalf from the Front.

connections offered him to military and political figures, as well as to the press) and to the publication of *The Thirty-Nine Steps* in October 1915 (having been serialised over the summer in *Blackwood's*).<sup>74</sup> Buchan solved the conundrum of how to write marketable fiction about the war by setting *The Thirty-Nine Steps* not in the trenches but in the world of espionage. The Germans are the enemy but the fast-paced plot takes place in Britain. In 1916, he published a sequel, *Greenmantle*. Again, rather than attempt to set his novel on the Western Front, the context closest to the heart of the British public, he turned his attention to Turkey.

In light of its subject matter *Greenmantle* has been called a 'singular war novel' and yet, it was a shrewd and prescient move on Buchan's part.<sup>75</sup> A novel set during the war but with a plot that rather than stagnating on the Western Front, provided a thrilling, fast-paced, adventure story that would have seemed comfortingly familiar to those who had grown up on Stevenson, Henty and Rider Haggard. Unsurprisingly, *Greenmantle* proved immensely popular. In 1916 it sold 34,426 copies. Sales dwindled in 1917 but in 1918 over 50,000 copies were sold.<sup>76</sup> If Hodder & Stoughton had not published Conan Doyle's *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* in 1918, *Greenmantle* would have been their best-selling novel that year and it has stood the test of time. It went through over thirty editions in its first twenty years and has never been out of print.<sup>77</sup> Contemporary reviewers liked the fast-paced plot but described it as fantastical. 'Mr Buchan remarks that

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<sup>74</sup> For example, his father-in-law was first cousin to the Duke of Westminster and Haig was a fellow Brasenose man.

<sup>75</sup> See Kate Macdonald's introduction to the 1993 edition of *Greenmantle* (Oxford, 1993).

<sup>76</sup> Kate Macdonald, *The Fiction of John Buchan with particular reference to the Richard Hannay novels* (unpublished thesis, University College London, 1991), p.20.

<sup>77</sup> It is still commonly stocked in bookshops and frequently referenced in the context of the most significant spy novels of the twentieth century (see, for example, Hepburn, *Intrigue: Espionage and Culture* (New Haven, 2005)). It caused a stir of controversy in 2005 when the BBC withdrew a radio adaptation because of fears of offending Muslims (according to Storer the BBC's dramatisation was eventually broadcast in December 2005 (Colin Storer, "The German of caricature, the real German, the fellow we were up against": German stereotypes in John Buchan's *Greenmantle*, *Journal of European Studies*, March 2009, Vol.39 (1), p.36-57, p.55). Fresh editions, published in 2011, were accompanied in the *Daily Express* by a full page article identifying Hannay as a 'political prophet' and the facts of *Greenmantle* as 'uncannily relevant' (*Daily Express*, 1 August 2011, p.13).

the war has driven the word “improbable” from our vocabulary, and that melodrama has become the prosiest realism. Melodrama, however, if we may be pardoned for saying so, rarely goes as far as “Greenmantle”<sup>78</sup>. Critics viewed the book as an opportunity for escapism in gloomy times. It was to be read as an ‘antidote and complement to the graver volumes about the dire hostilities’.<sup>79</sup> No doubt Buchan did see it as offering escapism on one level. Morale boosters were badly needed, especially in the latter half of 1916, but the plot was not fantastical.

The story concerns Hannay’s efforts to foil an Islamic jihad, which has been conceived and nurtured by German ringleaders. Whilst the average Briton may have found the detail of the plot implausible, the concepts of pan-Islamism and jihad were familiar ones within government circles, and, as has been seen in the preceding chapters, a preoccupation of a fearful Whitehall. Indeed, the closeness of Buchan’s plot to some of Britain’s vital strategic concerns, leads Hew Strachan to observe, in his article on Buchan during the war, that the

central conundrum posed by Buchan’s wartime activities is the one raised by Lloyd George in his memoirs: what was the relationship between Buchan the man of affairs, historian, and propagandist, and Buchan the novelist? How far did fact, or knowledge of the facts, affect his fiction? How could a man commissioned in the Intelligence Corps, operating within the Foreign Office and then at General Headquarters, continue to be allowed to write thrillers that were so close to the truth, and that went to the heart of some of the central preoccupations of British wartime intelligence?<sup>80</sup>

The answer may lie in the fact that his popular readership did react with incredulity and hence the Hannay books did not threaten British intelligence but, on the other hand, served a positive, propagandist purpose in numerous respects.

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<sup>78</sup> ‘Greenmantle’, *The Bookman*, November 1916, p.51.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Hew Strachan, ‘John Buchan and the First World War: Fact into Fiction’, *War in History*, 2009, 16(3), 298-324, p. 304.

Whilst Buchan may not have had official endorsement for his novel, indeed he claimed it was merely something he had scribbled down on journeys to amuse himself, it fitted very comfortably within the Wellington House mould.<sup>81</sup> Although he had not yet assumed his role as de facto head of the Department of Information, Buchan was already involved in propaganda work for the Foreign Office (one historian describes him in 1916 as the Foreign Office's 'chief "spin doctor"'<sup>82</sup>) and had produced a number of books and pamphlets for Wellington House, including *Britain's War by Land* and *The Achievement of France* in 1915, (and *The Battle of Jutland* in late 1916).<sup>83</sup> He was entirely at home with Masterman's propagandist techniques.

Identifying Buchan's wartime novels as propaganda does not, of course, mean dismissing them as lacking intellectual integrity. Like the majority of Wellington House's writers, Buchan believed propaganda meant 'the dissemination of true facts wherever they would do good, and not the manufacture of stories which, however flattering to the Allies, however derogatory to the enemy, had no firm basis in fact' and he saw no moral dilemma in seeking to influence readers by conveying what he believed to be the truth.<sup>84</sup> Writing in relation to Buchan's work for *Nelson's History of the War*, Keith Grieves observes that 'books which broadly served strategic propagandist objectives will be deemed propaganda, to the exclusion of any review of the writer's intent and overall perspective'.<sup>85</sup> This implies a post-war, pejorative understanding of propaganda. What is submitted here is that Buchan's writing could simultaneously amount to propaganda (as he understood it) and a thorough and genuine reflection of his own views. As Strachan puts it, for Buchan propaganda was simply 'a form of truth-telling'.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> See 'Greenmantle', *The Bookman*, November 1916, p.51.

<sup>82</sup> Redley, 'Origins of the Problem of Trust', p.31.

<sup>83</sup> Andrew Lownie, *John Buchan, The Presbyterian Cavalier* (London, 1995), p.125.

<sup>84</sup> Adam Smith, p.201.

<sup>85</sup> Grieves, 'Buchan as a Contemporary Military Historian', p.535.

<sup>86</sup> Strachan, 'John Buchan', p.324.

That this ‘truth-telling’ entailed a degree of didacticism would have been something he felt entirely comfortable with. After all, he was doing no more than following a tradition set by many of his Edwardian and Victorian predecessors.

The importance of *Greenmantle* as a resource for the purposes of this research cannot be overstated. It is unique as a war novel written during the war with a focus on Britain’s conflict with Turkey; it is a significant book because of its enduring popularity; and, it was written by a figure on the ‘inside’ with knowledge of both Foreign Office and military strategy as well as a close relationship with the propaganda machine organised from Wellington House. It informs the historian on all the themes of this thesis: on Britain’s perception of herself as an imperial power and as a power peopled by a certain type of race, her view of the Oriental ‘other’ as well as the German ‘other’ of the war years, on the means by which she justified her role as belligerent and on her strategic imperatives during the first half of the war. Furthermore, as discussed in the introduction to this thesis, it is contended that such an exploration has not previously been undertaken despite substantial academic interest in Buchan’s life and works. To date, he is the subject of three biographies, and much critical writing on subjects as diverse as his Calvinism, his attitudes towards women and his supernatural tales. An important collection of essays, reassessing his work and his significance, was published in 2009 and sought to demonstrate his relevance to new ‘cultural, historical and literary exploration’.<sup>87</sup> His novels have featured particularly within the context of two areas of literary criticism: first, as early examples within the genre of twentieth-century spy fiction and, secondly, in the context of Anglo-German literary encounters.<sup>88</sup> Only Ahmed al-Rawi, an Iraqi scholar, has made a serious attempt (in articles for Macdonald’s 2009

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<sup>87</sup> Macdonald, *Reassessing John Buchan*, p.6.

<sup>88</sup> The two most important Buchan biographies are J. Adam Smith’s and Andrew Lownie’s. Kate Macdonald’s 2009 collection of essays, *Reassessing John Buchan*, is a valuable addition. Works that look at *Greenmantle* within the genre of spy fiction include Priya Satia’s *Spies in Arabia*, and Reeva Spector Simon’s *Spies and Holy Wars*. Colin Storer and Peter Firchow have both considered the depiction of Anglo-German relations in *Greenmantle*.

collection of essays, in *The Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* and in *The John Buchan Journal*) to read *Greenmantle* closely as a text from which Buchan's views on Arab and Turkish Muslims can be interpreted in the context of Britain's imperial position.<sup>89</sup> In contrast to the findings of this thesis, Al-Rawi refers only to a 'deep-rooted' hatred of Muslim Turks in the early twentieth century and concludes sweepingly that Buchan 'emphasizes that the East is backward and decadent, and its people are mostly corrupt and childish'.<sup>90</sup> The substantive problem with al-Rawi's analysis is his failure to place Buchan within his historical context both culturally and, more specifically, as a propagandist working within the ambit of the government's wartime objectives.

### ***Greenmantle* as a general work of propaganda**

Recruitment was one of the primary functions of British war propaganda between 1914 and 1916, and Buchan did not miss an opportunity to assist. 'It is a wonderful war for youth and brains' declares Sir Walter Bullivant, the Foreign Office operative who recruits Richard Hannay for the mission, underlining the opportunities which the war offered for ambitious young men.<sup>91</sup> When Hannay reaches the war zone at Erzerum where the Turks are engaging the Russians, he is soothed by the sound of the big guns which remind him of his time on the Western Front. The guns represent the experience he shared with 'so many good fellows' when he engaged in 'proper work, and the only task for a man'.<sup>92</sup> His work as a spy may be dangerous and exciting, comparable with 'playing chuck-farthing at the Loos cross-roads', however, it is of secondary importance to the real business which is taking place on the Western Front.<sup>93</sup> Buchan even

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<sup>89</sup> *Greenmantle* does not receive substantive attention from Said, amounting as it does to popular rather than literary fiction.

<sup>90</sup> Al-Rawi, 'Islam and the East', p.127.

<sup>91</sup> John Buchan, *Greenmantle*, (London, 2007), p.3.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p.198.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p.20.

attempted to convince the reader that the Western Front was more exciting than being a spy, when Hannay observes at the end of his adventure that it ‘was a side-show which, whatever its importance, had none of the exhilaration of the main effort’.<sup>94</sup> Hannay and his friend Sandy Arbuthnot reflect on how lucky they are to have participated in the war, and observe how much worse it must be for men with families and hence how important it was for unattached men to volunteer.

[T]hink of the men with wives and children and homes that were the biggest things in life to them. For fellows like us to shirk would be black cowardice. It’s small credit for us to stick it out. But when those others shut their teeth and went forward, they were blessed heroes ....<sup>95</sup>

Buchan was a ‘Westerner’ and made it very clear where the heart of the war lay. However, like those in the War Cabinet, he did not believe the importance of the Western Front precluded the need to suppress activities in the East that could serve as a distraction and thereby lead to failure in the West. ‘If the East blazes up, our effort will be distracted from Europe,’ explains Bullivant, ‘and the great coup may fail. The stakes are no less than victory and defeat’.<sup>96</sup> Hannay must prevent the Entente war effort from being diverted from their fight on the Western Front by stopping the Germans from inciting a global jihad. In order to uncover the plot, Hannay needs to infiltrate the German ringleaders. He pretends to be a Boer who hates the English and has a plan for helping the Germans win the war. As a consequence he is introduced to Colonel von Stumm, a ‘perfect mountain of a fellow, six and a half feet if he was an inch, with shoulders on him like a shorthorn bull’.<sup>97</sup> Hannay seeks to convince the Germans that he is on their side by making a proposal to distract the British in Europe by stirring trouble in Africa:

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p.254.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p.257.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p.8.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p.43.



England will not let East Africa go. She fears for Egypt and she fears too for India. If you press her there she will send armies and more armies till she is so weak in Europe that a child can crush her. That is England's way. She cares more for her Empire than for what may happen to her allies.<sup>98</sup>

Hannay knows that this is what the Germans want to hear but, of course, it is the opposite of the position Buchan describes as the real British stance which is to focus on the Western Front and support her European allies. Whilst obviously intended to mislead, Hannay's proposal accurately reflected the reality of concerns during 1915 and 1916 regarding allegations by France and Russia that England was not pulling her weight in the Allied war effort and did indeed put her own interests first.

### **The Germans in *Greenmantle***

Some academics, including Stevenson, Storer and Firchow, suggest that Buchan's Hannay novels offered him an opportunity to escape from the bonds of 'hypocritical propaganda' and express his own personal views.<sup>99</sup> As proof of this they cite his sympathetic depiction of some German characters in *Greenmantle*, including the Kaiser, as opposed to his depiction of Germans elsewhere. Once again, this is to fail to take into account Buchan's own understanding of propaganda, which was as a form of truth-telling and hence not remotely hypocritical. A more likely explanation is that Buchan, who had spent much of the year prior to writing *Greenmantle* close to the Front and had been present as an observer at several battles, knew first-hand that relentless denigration of the enemy did not necessarily sit well with the troops. On the contrary, in a book written ostensibly with the intention 'simply to entertain' them, he would have understood that, whilst British soldiers may not have liked Fritz, he held their

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p.46.

<sup>99</sup> See Randall Stevenson, *Literature and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Oxford, 2013), p.32, Firchow, p.91 and Storer, p.45.

grudging respect and sympathy.<sup>100</sup> Thus, when describing the German army, Hannay observes that ‘her men were nothing to boast of on the average ... but she seemed to have an inexhaustible supply of hard, competent N.C.O.s’.<sup>101</sup>

Colonel von Stumm, on the other hand, by far the most vividly depicted enemy character, is proffered as an example of the archetypal wartime Hun: primitive and militaristic. He is a bully and physically bestial, like a ‘big ape’.<sup>102</sup> Hannay has to act submissively which goes against the grain for the plucky Scot. ‘For the first time in my life I had been bullied without hitting back. When I realized it I nearly choked with anger’.<sup>103</sup> In contrast to Stumm, Hannay is a man who stands up for his values whatever the odds and not to do so is unconscionable. Stumm is rendered especially loathsome and unnatural by the fact that as a counterpoint to his brutality, he has a delicate, feminine side. In Stumm’s private quarters he has a room which is excessively luxurious and refined: ‘It was the room of a man who had a fashion for frippery, who had a perverted taste for soft delicate things ... I began to see the queer other side to my host, that evil side which gossip had spoken of as not unknown in the German army’.<sup>104</sup> The Huns are alien and unwholesome, the antithesis of Hannay and Sandy who are straightforward, plain-speaking, upright men (and, of course, heterosexual).

But what really seemed to distinguish the Germans from the British, even men like Herr Gaudian (a German engineer whom Buchan treats sympathetically), appears to be a parallel of what separated the British from Muslims, namely, a propensity for fanaticism, in Germany’s case stemming from excessive patriotism. Thus ‘she produced good and bad, cads and gentlemen, but she could

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<sup>100</sup> Adam Smith, p.207.

<sup>101</sup> Buchan, *Greenmantle*, p.51.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p.48.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p.49.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p.72. This is likely a reference to a series of homosexual scandals that rocked the German court and upper echelons of the army in the early 1900s (see Storer, p.47).

put a bit of the fanatic into them all'.<sup>105</sup> When Hannay meets the enigmatic Hilda von Einem, the German woman at the heart of the plot, she too is described as having pale eyes with 'the cold light of the fanatic'.<sup>106</sup> However, just as Gilbert Parker posited in *The World in the Crucible*, Buchan viewed German fanaticism as different to the pure simplicity of Islam because they had sinned against the light, the beacon of civilisation. In terms reminiscent of the simplistic, anti-Nietzschean diatribe expressed in Wellington House propaganda and in the press, Buchan wrote that Germany 'wants to destroy and simplify; but it isn't the simplicity of the ascetic, which is of the spirit, but the simplicity of the madman that grinds down all the contrivances of civilization to a featureless monotony'.<sup>107</sup> Buchan echoed the sentiments, observed in the preceding chapters, that religious fanaticism could be disparaged but it could also be met with fear and awe whereas German fanaticism was unacceptable because of its deviation from civilised standards. In either case, the notion of 'fanaticism', undoubtedly an 'attitude word', was the antithesis of English commonsense and decency.<sup>108</sup> It represented the chaotic, the irrational and the unreasonable, standing in opposition to British order.

As mentioned above, the mastermind of the German plot is not a man but a woman, Hilda von Einem, described as the most dangerous woman on earth, a 'Super-woman' of the Nietzschean variety.<sup>109</sup> According to Storer she is dangerous and threatening not because she is German but because she is a woman playing a man's game.<sup>110</sup> She 'eschews traditional gender roles and ambitions in favour of the 'masculine' spheres of high politics, war and

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p.62.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p.172

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p.176

<sup>108</sup> Barrie Paskins, 'Fanaticism in the Modern Era', in Matthew Hughes and Gaynor Johnson, eds., *Fanaticism and Conflict in the Modern Age* (London, 2005), pp.7-18, p.17.

<sup>109</sup> Buchan, *Greenmantle*, p.177.

<sup>110</sup> See Storer, p.49.

espionage'.<sup>111</sup> In the previous section the use of gender definitions to delineate East and West was discussed and it was asserted that the Middle East was arguably a more masculine version of the mythopoeic East than Britain felt comfortable with. In the years preceding the war it had become a less passive, more threatening place than the feminised version represented by languorous India. The unsettling of traditional assumptions allowed for strong English women to experience the East as a zone for adventure not for domestic drama, in other words as a masculinised zone. Perhaps, von Einem is doubly threatening because as well as machinating in a man's world, she does so in a realm that is already perceived as potentially menacing and emasculating. Von Einem is the metonymical representation of a conjunction that must have seemed horrifying to the Edwardian elite: the threat of enfranchised, modern woman combined with the threat to the Empire of an assertive and aggressive East.

### **Fears of a pan-Islamic threat**

Reflecting the realities of the political situation, Foreign Office figure, Walter Bullivant, points out to Hannay that the Kaiser's call to jihad has yet to ignite the Islamic world. Nonetheless, he is sceptical about the apparent lack of fire in the bellies of the Ottoman Empire's Muslims. No doubt, harking back to the more fanatical activities of Muslims in the past, particularly the Sudanese Mahdiyya, and reflecting the government's fears regarding pan-Islamic activities, he believes there must be more going on in the Muslim world than meets the eye:

The Sheikh-ul-Islam is neglected and though the Kaiser proclaims a Holy War and calls himself Hadji Mohammed Guillermo, and says the Hohenzollerns are descended from the Prophet, that seems to have fallen pretty flat. The ordinary man again will answer that Islam in Turkey is becoming a back number, and that Krupp guns are the new gods. Yet – I don't know. I do not quite believe in Islam becoming a back number.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup>Buchan, *Greenmantle*, p.5.

Mid-1916 was, of course, a low point in terms of British prestige following the failures in the Dardanelles and Mesopotamia. It was during this period that Mark Sykes sought to galvanize Eastern-related propaganda within Wellington House and *al-Haqīqah* was instituted. Despite its failure in the first two years of the war, a German-inspired Islamic jihad remained a pressing concern. As ever, the paramount fear was its potentially damaging impact on India. Bullivant articulates this and explains to Hannay:

[T]he Syrian army is as fanatical as the hordes of the Mahdi. The Senussi [in Libya] have taken a hand in the game. The Persian Moslems are threatening trouble. There is a dry wind blowing through the East, and the parched grasses wait the spark. And the wind is blowing towards the Indian border.<sup>113</sup>

Bullivant believes that whilst the Germans may be able to manipulate opinion they will need more than their militarism to ignite a holy war. They will need some totem such as the coming of the Mahdi in Sudan in 1882. If such a sacred symbol could be found it would be much easier for the Germans to co-opt Muslims in the Middle East. ‘Islam is a fighting creed, and the mullah still stands in the pulpit with the Koran in one hand and a drawn sword in the other. Supposing there is some Ark of the Covenant which will madden the remotest Moslem peasant with dreams of Paradise?’<sup>114</sup> Hannay and Sandy hypothesize that the Germans must have identified a person who is descended from the Prophet. No-one else, they believe, would have sufficient influence to bind all of Islam together. ‘To capture all Islam – and I gather that is what we fear – the man must be of the Koreish, the tribe of the Prophet himself’.<sup>115</sup> No mention is made of the Sherif of Mecca but he was surely in Buchan’s mind. After all, he penned *Greenmantle* in the summer of 1916 as the Arab Revolt was unfolding.

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p.6.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p.19.

When Hannay is trying to gain German trust by posing as a pro-German Boer, he seeks to establish his credibility by proposing to the Germans that he can incite a religiously oriented uprising in East Africa amongst the Muslims:

First find the race that fears its priests. It is waiting for you – the Mussulmans of Somaliland and the Abyssinian border and the Blue and White Nile. They would be like dried grasses to catch fire if you used the flint and steel of their religion. Look what the English suffered from a crazy Mullah [the ‘Mad Mullah’, Muhammad Abdullah Hassan of Somaliland] who ruled only a dozen villages. Once get the flames going and they will lick up the pagans of the west and south. That is the way of Africa. How many thousands, think you, were in the Mahdi’s army who never heard of the Prophet till they saw the black flags of the Emirs going into battle?<sup>116</sup>

Buchan could just as easily have mentioned Ali Dinar of Darfur who had declared a jihad against the British in 1915 and was only defeated after the Egyptian Army invaded Darfur in May 1916. Certainly, the prospect of an African jihad whilst more remote and hence less threatening to the Empire was taken seriously by the Foreign Office. Mark Sykes’s papers contain a memorandum of a meeting in which he discussed the susceptibility of African Muslims to fanaticism and warned that ‘the negro turned Mohammedan is a fiercer and more fanatical upholder of the faith than the more educated Arab’.<sup>117</sup> In Sykes’s view, expressed in eerily similar terms to Hannay’s, ‘although admittedly a Turkish Jihad would find few followers [in East Africa], an African Jihad would be widely acceptable and would be likely to spread in a very alarming manner’.<sup>118</sup>

Of course, whilst pan-Islamism was perceived as a real threat, Buchan stressed Britain’s ability to deal with it. To express vulnerability would be contrary to the imperative of maintaining British prestige. Bullivant, for example, echoing the

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p.47.

<sup>117</sup> Ts. Memo by Capt. CA Willis and JE Phillips on British policy on colonies and dependencies in East Africa, prepared after a conversation with Mark Sykes, 25 July 1917, HHC DDSY2/4/152.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

romantic world of imperial espionage created by Kipling in *Kim*, emphasises the power and the reach of the British Empire:

I have reports from agents everywhere – pedlars in South Russia, Afghanistan horse-dealers, Turcoman merchants, pilgrims on the road to Mecca, sheikhs in North Africa, sailors on the Black Sea coasters, sheep-skinned Mongols, Hindu fakirs, Greek traders in the Gulf, as well as respectable consuls who use cyphers.<sup>119</sup>

A similar point is made when Blenkiron, Hannay's American ally, comments on the strength and scale of Britain's intelligence network. 'I calculate there isn't much that happens in any corner of the earth that you don't know within twenty-four hours'.<sup>120</sup> Thus, Britain's power is not merely mechanical. It is embodied in the extent of her influence, the global nexus of contacts and the unique ability of British men, epitomized by explorer Richard Burton, to adapt, to infiltrate, to immerse themselves in foreign cultures whilst never, of course, allowing themselves to forget who they were or why they were there.

When Hannay gets to Constantinople he encounters the 'Company of the Rosy Hours' (an influential Islamic sect described as 'the most famous fraternity in Western Asia').<sup>121</sup> They assist Hannay in his mission, as they have been infiltrated by his friend and accomplice, Sandy Arbuthnot. Describing the leader (who is actually Sandy in disguise although Hannay doesn't know it at the time), he observes that he was 'a tall man dressed in skins .... [h]e capered like a wild animal, keeping up a strange high monotone that fairly gave me the creeps'.<sup>122</sup> Later, he describes how Sandy, in his costume, 'had the appearance of some mad mullah'.<sup>123</sup> For Buchan, madness, fanaticism and Islam were cut from the same cloth, and yet he credits the Companions with a degree of authenticity. They

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<sup>119</sup> Buchan, *Greenmantle*, p.7.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p.145.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p.137. Perhaps the Company was modelled on the Sanussi order, a powerful Sufi brotherhood based in Libya who caused problems for the British in Western Egypt in late 1915.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p.123.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p.137.

were ‘magic workers’ able to create illusions and entrance people with their music and dancing. Hannay finds them daunting and mysterious. They have a powerful simplicity and devoutness which does not warrant ridicule or disdain. Again, it is evident that the label of fanaticism when attached to Muslims called for a different response to the militaristic fanaticism attached to the Germans.

### **Respect for the ‘Old Turk’ and Traditional Islam**

When Sandy is undercover as a member of the Company, he finds out that there is indeed a religious movement underway:

A seer has arisen of the blood of the Prophet, who will restore the Khalifate to its old glories and Islam to its old purity. His sayings are everywhere in the Moslem world. All the orthodox believers have them at heart. That is why they are enduring grinding poverty and preposterous taxation, and that is why their young men are rolling up to the armies and dying without complaint in Gallipoli and Transcaucasia. They believe they are on the eve of a great deliverance.<sup>124</sup>

These sentiments have much in common with those of Masfield and Wedgwood, considered in Chapter One. Contrary to al-Rawi’s assertion that Islam is depicted ‘as a merciless and militant religion’, Buchan’s characters express respect and admiration.<sup>125</sup> Like Masfield and Wedgwood, Sandy is impressed by the piety of Muslim soldiers and their commitment to their faith. Their willingness to follow a new prophet is not described as especially naive or gullible. On the contrary, Hannay and Arbuthnot are convinced that for a prophet to be followed he would have to be authentic. ‘He’d have to be rather a wonder on his own account – saintly, eloquent and that sort of thing’.<sup>126</sup> In the words of

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p.139.

<sup>125</sup> Ahmed al-Rawi (2007), ‘Manipulating Muslims in John Buchan’s *Greenmantle* and AJ Quinnell’s *The Mahdi*: A pattern of consistency’ in *The John Buchan Journal*, Spring 2007, Issue 36, pp.18-32, p.18.

<sup>126</sup> Buchan, *Greenmantle*, p.19.



Gaudian, the German engineer of whom Hannay approves, Islam 'is a noble faith and despises liars and boasters and betrayers of their salt'.<sup>127</sup>

How then, have these honest and devout Turks come under the control of the CUP? Bullivant, in explaining this conundrum to Hannay, echoes the view that the CUP were not real Turks but 'Levantines' seeking to despoil and exploit and using religion to do so. They consist in Bullivant's words, of 'a Polish adventurer, meaning Enver, and a collection of Jews and gipsies' who have taken advantage of Turkish piety.<sup>128</sup> In Buchan's writing the perceived contamination posed by the coalescence of East and West is as evident as in the pre-war examples given in the preceding section of this chapter. Thus, for example, when Hannay encounters Mr Kuprasso, the proprietor of a coffee-house, he describes him in highly unflattering terms: 'He was a fat, oldish fellow with a long nose, very like the Greek traders you see on the Zanzibar coast. I beckoned to him and he waddled forward, smiling oilily'.<sup>129</sup> Kuprasso typifies the British idea of the Levantine, debauched and untrustworthy and, like the CUP, a malign and manipulative influence on true Turks.

Buchan was respectful towards traditional Islam and the 'Old Turk'. He also sought to avoid undermining Turkish soldiery whilst simultaneously accenting Britain's ability to defeat the Ottomans on the battlefield (just as he sought to emphasise the risks of pan-Islamism whilst also stressing the Empire's ability to counter it). Accordingly, he did not dismiss Turkish soldiers as weak as to do so would run counter to 1916 assumptions regarding the fighting spirit of the Turk following the Gallipoli evacuation in January 1916 and setbacks in Mesopotamia, but he emphasised that poor leadership and lack of supplies rendered them vulnerable. When Hannay sees some Gallipoli troops on the march to Erzerum he describes them as 'a fine, hardy lot of ruffians', weakened

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p.153.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p.5.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p.119.

by poor management and lack of supplies: ‘many were deplorably ragged, and I didn’t think much of their boots’.<sup>130</sup> In a subsequent passage, Hannay is even more complimentary of the Turkish soldier, epitomizing a view which, as has been seen in preceding chapters, was common in 1916:

All morning we wriggled through a big lot of troops, a brigade at least, who swung along at a great pace with a fine free stride that I don’t think I have ever seen bettered. I must say I took a fancy to the Turkish fighting man: I remembered the testimonial our fellows gave him as a clean fighter, and I felt very bitter that Germany should have lugged him into this dirty business.<sup>131</sup>

Manifestly, at the time Buchan wrote *Greenmantle*, the legend of the ‘clean fighting Turk’ was alive and well.

### **The Imperial Ideal**

In his memoirs Buchan wrote that Hannay had traits copied from several friends whereas Sandy Arbuthnot was ‘reminiscent of Aubrey Herbert’.<sup>132</sup> Together, Hannay and Arbuthnot are exemplars of the British imperial figure, but it is Arbuthnot who captures the imagination and who lies at the heart of the novel as the grown up successor of the *Boy’s Own* heroes of juvenile fiction.<sup>133</sup> Indeed, in the view of historian Robert MacDonald, Buchan and his peers, such as Conan Doyle and Sapper, took exactly the same model as the juvenile fiction but substituted men for boys, or at least, introduced ‘man-boys’ who fulfilled the criteria of contemporary masculinity in terms of their bravery and decency but were ‘uncontaminated by sex’.<sup>134</sup> Whilst it is certainly true that Arbuthnot can be

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., p.180.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., p.183.

<sup>132</sup> John Buchan, *Memory Hold-the-Door* (London, 1940), p.195. Some scholars, such as al-Rawi, have asserted that T.E. Lawrence was Buchan’s inspiration for Arbuthnot in *Greenmantle* but this is not the case. It was only in the 1920s that the Arbuthnot character developed traits of Lawrence.

<sup>133</sup> Hannay and Arbuthnot may be Scottish, like Buchan, but for him that rendered them even more archetypal. He was a committed Unionist, who, like his English peer group, generally referred to Britain as England (see Strachan, ‘John Buchan’, p.308).

<sup>134</sup> MacDonald, *The Language of Empire*, p.210.

read as a one-dimensional, cartoon figure bringing 1980s film character Indiana Jones to mind, it is worth stopping to consider Buchan's representation of Arbuthnot, and his reliance on the real life figure of Aubrey Herbert, to extrapolate what attributes, beyond 'bravery and decency' were considered important in the wartime imperial figure. If Buchan was trying to convey the tenets of Britain's civilisation, to emphasise in the battle of ideas why her value system was preferable to Germany's, how were these values represented in Arbuthnot?

Aubrey Herbert, intimate friend and colleague of Mark Sykes and friend of both Pickthall and Buchan, was the son of the Earl of Carnarvon.<sup>135</sup> He attended Eton and Oxford where one of his closest friends was Raymond Asquith (who was also a friend of Buchan's). Herbert's childhood had been circumscribed by his near-blindness. Attributed to a congenital malformation, he was told by his doctors that his eyes were so weak he should only use them to read for twenty minutes each day.<sup>136</sup> It was only when he was seventeen that an operation improved his sight to the extent that he 'could see distances, albeit indistinctly. He could shoot, and distinguish figures across a room, though not well enough to recognise them'.<sup>137</sup> Perhaps it was the limitations imposed upon his childhood by his poor sight that nurtured in him an exaggerated thirst for adventure, or at least gave him a sense that he needed to seize every opportunity he could to taste life to the full (he became near blind again, this time permanently, in 1923 when the retina of his good eye became detached).<sup>138</sup> Certainly, just like Sykes, whose childhood was lived in the shadow of his parents' scandal, Herbert left university with something to prove to himself and others. Like Sykes, he was of an

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<sup>135</sup> Sykes and Herbert were extremely close friends. Herbert gave his first son the middle name Mark, after Sykes, in 1922. On Sykes's death he described their friendship as 'one of the most generous things in [his] life' (Herbert, Obituary of Mark Sykes, undated, SHC DD/HER/53).

<sup>136</sup> Margaret Fitzherbert, *The Man Who Was Greenmantle: A Biography of Aubrey Herbert* (Oxford, 1985), p.9.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, p.17.

<sup>138</sup> Later in 1923 he had all his teeth extracted as he had been misguidedly advised that this would improve his eyesight. The resultant septicemia killed him, aged 43, in September 1923.

essentially happy, optimistic disposition, confident of his place in the world and his entitlement as an Englishman. Less like Sykes, who, at least according to Gertrude Bell, always travelled like a tourist, with a retinue of home comforts and servants, Herbert became an intrepid, risk-taking adventurer who steered well off the beaten track and was much aided by his skill as a linguist, able to converse in Turkish, Arabic, Albanian, Greek, French, Italian, and German.<sup>139</sup>

By 1914, Herbert had forged a reputation for himself as an Eastern expert, attributable less to his published material than to the renown he acquired for his fearless exploits in the region, including a journey in 1905 to the remote Yemeni city of Sen'aa in the wake of a war between Yemeni rebels and the Turks, a journey in 1906 across the Syrian desert from Baghdad to Damascus, and numerous visits to war torn Albania in the company of a reprobate Albanian highlander named Kiazim. Buchan's Sandy Arbuthnot, as well as being an old Etonian and Oxford graduate, is also, like Herbert, intellectual, multi-lingual, and a plucky adventurer, whose exploits in Asia are the stuff of legend. Buchan seemed especially to admire what he conceived as the British willingness, and ability, to truly fathom other races and cultures, attributes he considered unique to the British style of imperialism. Accordingly, he observed in the context of his description of Sandy that 'we call ourselves insular, but the truth is that we are the only race on earth that can produce men capable of getting inside the skin of remote peoples'.<sup>140</sup> Whereas the British could understand foreigners, a German could not as he 'has no gift for laying himself alongside different types of men .... He may have plenty of brains, as Stumm had, but he has the poorest notion of psychology of any of God's creatures'.<sup>141</sup>

Herbert's interest in, and frequent empathy for, different races and cultures was well known and, during his travels, he, like Sykes and Pickthall, formed a deep

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<sup>139</sup> See Fitzherbert, p.173 and Barr, p.9. Is he, perhaps, a grown up Kim?

<sup>140</sup> Buchan, *Greenmantle*, p.17.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p.66.

attachment to the Turks and for Constantinople. Whilst he quickly became disenchanted with the CUP, his encounters with the Turks led him to believe they were a brave, compassionate and generous people.<sup>142</sup> He saw Turkish rule in Ottoman Asia as a potential force for order in a region riven by belligerent factions. In contrast, echoing the stance of Sykes (and Pickthall) the Arabs of Persia were ‘an immoral people’ and the Marsh Arabs were ‘a very low type, hideous, [and] very savage looking’.<sup>143</sup> His attitude had not changed when he ended up in Mesopotamia in early 1916, in a bid to relieve Townsend at Kut, and found the Marsh Arabs ‘always in the background like ghouls, swarming on every battlefield and killing the wounded of both sides’.<sup>144</sup>

When war broke out, Herbert remained sympathetic towards the Turks although, by late 1915, he had become resigned to the prospect of the dismantlement of their Asian Empire.<sup>145</sup> His sympathy was undiminished by his participation as an Intelligence Officer in the Gallipoli campaign where his main duty was as interpreter and interrogator of prisoners and deserters. Although he balked at not being able to fight, he was appeased by the fact that this meant he would not have to hurt Turkish soldiers. In his 1919 account of the campaign his ongoing compassion and respect for the Turks is evident and clearly remained unabated even after the war’s end. He thought the Turks fought ‘splendidly’<sup>146</sup> and ‘very gallantly’<sup>147</sup> and bemoaned the way the Allied commanders treated them like ‘Hottentots’, in other words, underestimated them as ignorant savages incapable

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<sup>142</sup> See Fitzherbert, p.59.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., p.64-65, citing undated extracts from Herbert’s diary (approx. spring 1906).

<sup>144</sup> Aubrey Herbert, *Mons, Anzac and Kut* (London, 1919), p.205.

<sup>145</sup> See Fitzherbert, p. 169.

<sup>146</sup> Herbert, *Mons* (1919 edition), p.92.

<sup>147</sup> Aubrey Herbert, *Mons, Anzac and Kut*, Edward Melotte edition (Barnsley, 2009), p.77. Herbert’s published diary was edited, ostensibly by him, to exclude certain of his own ‘private thoughts’. Notably, the reference to the Turks fighting ‘very gallantly’ was edited from the original account. In the 2009 edition, Melotte reinstated many of the original thoughts and criticisms although he has not identified where these additions have been made and so (short of reverting to the original manuscript) it is only by comparing the 1919 version with the 2009 edition, that it is possible to see some of what was removed.

of fighting bravely or effectively.<sup>148</sup> He commented on the respect the Allied soldiers gradually gained for the Turkish soldiers, and how ‘no one seems annoyed when I say they are good fellows’.<sup>149</sup> Later he observed that ‘it is very curious the way the men speak of [the Turks] here. They still can’t be made to wear gas helmets because they say the Turks are clean fighters and won’t use gas’.<sup>150</sup> His most extensive comment comes in his entry for 16th August 1915. He observed:

[T]here was a remarkable contrast between our war against the Germans and the Turks. In France the British soldier started fighting good-naturedly [Herbert was at Mons in August and September of 1914], and it took considerable time to work him up to a pitch of hatred; at Anzac the troops from the Dominions began their campaign with feelings of contempt and hatred, which gradually turned to respect for the Moslems.<sup>151</sup>

In Herbert’s experience, the pre-war idea of the ‘Clean Fighting Turk’ was reinforced rather than diminished by the reality of engaging with them.

In France, Gallipoli and Mesopotamia, Herbert showed unfailing gallantry, honesty, loyalty and compassion. In the Dardanelles he was instrumental in arranging a truce so the dead of both sides could be buried. He objected to the shelling of a mosque, seeing ‘no difference in principle between this and the destruction of Rheims Cathedral’.<sup>152</sup> He took care of the sick and injured, including Turkish wounded, frequently at the risk of his own life. At Kut he offered to join Townsend and give himself up to the Turks if it would make life easier to have him as an intermediary should Townsend and his troops surrender. When Kut did fall, Herbert negotiated with the Turkish victors, pressing hard for

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<sup>148</sup> Herbert, *Mons* (1919 edition), p.94.

<sup>149</sup> Herbert, *Mons* (2009 edition), p.69. Again, the original 1919 volume does not contain this quotation.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, p.133. Again, this extract is omitted from the 1919 volume.

<sup>151</sup> Herbert, *Mons* (1919 edition), p.165. The trenches were apparently so close at points that the two sides could hear each other speak. This alone, according to Rogan, had a humanising effect on the men and in periods of calm they would throw treats to one another (Rogan, p.198).

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, p.107.

leniency towards the Arab followers of Townsend's troops as well as fair treatment for the Allied prisoners. He stood up to General Gorringe, one of the Allied military commanders in the Mesopotamian campaign and widely considered to be a rude and aggressive bully, garnering universal popularity in the camp where soldiers came up to him and shook his hand, imploring him to 'stay and insult [Gorringe] once again'.<sup>153</sup> On his return to England he was instrumental in ensuring the appointment of the Royal Commission, set up to investigate the tragic shortcomings of the Mesopotamian campaign.

His moral integrity and his honesty, as much as his courage and sense of adventure, singled Herbert out as a true imperial hero in Buchan's eyes. Like Herbert, for both Sandy and Hannay 'honour' comes before all. Thus, after Sandy has, as part of his undercover operation as a member of the Company of the Rosy Hours, aided Hilda von Einem in her enterprises, he feels his character has been besmirched and Hannay sees this as posing a threat to Sandy's sanity. '[Sandy] would take more than mortal risks, and you couldn't scare him by any ordinary terror. But let his old conscience get cross-eyed, let him find himself in some situation which in his eyes involved his honour and he might go stark crazy'.<sup>154</sup> In contrast, it is the 'Oriental' propensity for dishonesty that causes Buchan's heroes the greatest consternation. When Hannay encounters bribery and corruption in Turkey he is so outraged that he is prepared to reject a bribe despite the fact that in doing so he jeopardizes the entire mission. Corruption is unconscionable in any circumstances and makes Hannay 'boil up like a geyser'.<sup>155</sup> His reaction to the Turkish culprit, Rasta Bey, is an urge 'to lay him over my knee and spank him'.<sup>156</sup> Rasta Bey, the 'Oriental', is like a naughty child who needs to be taught what is right and wrong by a member of a class, and a race, who understand the value of integrity, duty and the rule of law.

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<sup>153</sup> Fitzherbert, p. 183.

<sup>154</sup> Buchan, *Greenmantle*, p.217.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., p.113.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., p.116.

On a grander scale, the new Turkish regime warranted similar opprobrium. As Blenkiron puts it (in Buchan's attempt at an American vernacular), 'those boys [Enver and Talaat] aren't any good. Enver's bright enough, and for sure he's got sand. He'll stick out a fight like a Vermont game-chicken, but he lacks the larger vision, sir. He doesn't understand the intricacies of the job no more than a suckling child'.<sup>157</sup> The CUP leaders may be tough, as evidenced by their wartime military successes, but they are the equivalent of nineteenth-century gunslingers: 'a pack of adventurers' lacking the insight and experience to rule successfully.<sup>158</sup> Of course, as has been argued throughout this thesis, Britain was peerless in the expertise with which she articulated the benefits of *her* rule and *her* concept of civilisation. Her nineteenth and early twentieth-century attempts to vindicate her expansionism on the basis of bestowing her civilisation on the less enlightened flowed seamlessly into justification for her belligerency. The moral force behind both was widely considered to lie in the idea of the British national 'character'.<sup>159</sup> As Disraeli had put it in the 1870s, 'it is not our iron ships, it is not our celebrated regiments, it is not these things which have created or indeed really maintain our empire. It is the character of our people'.<sup>160</sup> The essence of national 'character' was, in the words of historian, Sir Charles Lucas, writing in 1915, a 'strong sense of justice and love of fair play' fostered by the 'system of the great English public schools'.<sup>161</sup> Combined with these attributes was a level of humility found wanting in other Western races, which manifested itself in a tolerance of other cultures and religions.

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid., p.149.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., p.134.

<sup>159</sup> See Peter J. Cain, 'Character, 'Ordered Liberty', and the Mission to Civilise: British Moral Justification of Empire, 1870-1914', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol.40, No.4, November 2012, pp.557-578, p.559.

<sup>160</sup> Quoted in Cain, p.559.

<sup>161</sup> Sir Charles Lucas, *The British Empire: Six Lectures* (London, 1915), p.194.



National character underwrote not only Britain's entitlement to rule over 'subject races' but also her willingness to oppose the militaristic Hun, and Herbert, like Hannay and Arbuthnot, had 'character' in abundance. Another key to British imperial success according to Lucas was the ability of the Englishman to adapt and respond to the nuances of any situation. 'It is the practical capacity of the Englishman, his readiness to adjust the means to the end, his indifference to routine and rigid system, which ... has enabled the English race to handle with at least some considerable measure of success great areas and millions of human beings'.<sup>162</sup> Again, it can be seen that it was not the unyielding stickler for rules who was considered to have secured the success of the Empire, but the rule-breaker, the Establishment figure who lay slightly outside the mainstream, such as Clive, Gordon, Burton, and, naturally, Aubrey Herbert. These 'left fielders' could adapt and become so absorbed in their imperial duties that they could seem like fish out of water on their return to the metropole. Thus, in *Greenmantle*, Buchan observed, 'lean, brown men from the ends of the earth may be seen on the London pavements now and then in creased clothes, walking with the light outland step, slinking into clubs as if they could not remember whether or not they belonged to them'.<sup>163</sup> But, of course, their club membership confirms that they do belong. The key to their success may have been their capacity for adaptation but underneath they remain steadfastly English. Buchan, an outsider, a Scot from a modest background, likely had a keener awareness than most of the criteria required to fit the Establishment mould. Impeccably aristocratic and well-connected, but also gallant, scrupulously honest, intrepid, self-deprecating, and intellectually curious, it is unsurprising that Herbert, the quintessence of the elite English imperial gentleman, was a keystone for Buchan in his depiction of heroism, masculinity and the British notion of civilisation.

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid., p.194-5.

<sup>163</sup> Buchan, *Greenmantle*, p.16.

## ***Orientalism***

Thus, Buchan's depiction of fanaticism, of Islam, of Germans and of 'Orientals' can be seen to capture many of the cultural and strategic preoccupations of 1916 already addressed here. Far from a static, consistent Orientalist discourse, his novel reveals total engagement with prevailing concerns. However, to conclude from this that he did not also perpetuate pre-existing stereotypes regarding a mythopoeic East would be misleading. As has been seen, contemporary responses to Islam and the East usually went hand in hand with a continued reliance on caricature and cliché and *Greenmantle* was no exception. Thus, as Hannay proceeds towards Constantinople by train he finds the journey frustratingly slow and comments that on crossing the border into Turkey 'we struck the real supineness of the East'.<sup>164</sup> Similarly, Blenkiron points out the tardiness of the Turkish police but puts it down to the 'languid ways of an oriental despotism'.<sup>165</sup> Al-Rawi's claim that Buchan sought to 'propagate positive ideas of the British Empire and present negative stereotypes of the German and Turkish powers' has foundation.<sup>166</sup>

Although, when Buchan visited Constantinople in 1910, he described it as 'pure Arabian Nights', his narration of Hannay's initial impression of the city was entirely different.<sup>167</sup> Certainly, Hannay expects 'a sort of fairyland Eastern city, all white marble and blue water, and stately Turks in surplices, and veiled houris, and roses and nightingales'<sup>168</sup> but finds instead something horribly mundane and sordid:

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid., p.115.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., p.133.

<sup>166</sup> Al-Rawi, 'Buchan the Orientalist', unnumbered online.

<sup>167</sup> Adam Smith, p.177.

<sup>168</sup> Buchan, *Greenmantle*, p.117.

I saw what I took to be mosques and minarets, and they were about as impressive as factory chimneys. By and by we crossed a bridge, and paid a penny for the privilege. If I had known it was the famous Golden Horn I would have looked at it with more interest, but I saw nothing save a lot of moth-eaten barges and some queer little boats like gondolas ... I saw one old fellow who looked like my notion of a Turk, but most of the population had the appearance of London old-clothes men.<sup>169</sup>

Buchan went to some lengths to dispel the myth of an Orient redolent in mystique and grandeur. Instead, he portrayed Constantinople as a city both poor and ordinary. Worse, it was the deformed offspring of meshing East and West, its people and architecture more akin to squalid Western equivalents than to the stolid, hearty Anatolians or the grand Islamic architecture admired in Britain. Whilst Turkish soldiery merited respect, even admiration, Buchan gave himself free rein to depict their capital as the antithesis of an affluent, ordered British equivalent.

The more Hannay immerses himself in Constantinople, the more he finds it a lawless, chaotic, and degenerate place. When he heads toward the point of his rendezvous with Sandy and Blenkiron, he finds the street where the cafe is located, to be 'the filthiest place of all'.<sup>170</sup> Later, while exploring the city, Hannay observes that it was 'the rabble that caught the eye – a very wild, pinched, miserable rabble. I never in my life saw such swarms of beggars'.<sup>171</sup> Buchan's negative depiction of Constantinople may have been motivated by an intention to, as Said put it in his polemical study, construct it in opposition to a civilised West thereby justifying intervention and control. In the context of the war, however, it is likely that his interpretation was more complex. By rendering Constantinople in this light, Buchan was able to condemn the CUP administration without necessarily condemning the Turks. It is also possible that

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., p.118.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., p.144.

he sought to lower the city's prestige as home to the caliphate, rendering it instead a mundane rather than a sacred place, mired in corruption and degenerate Levantine influence.

Despite his depiction of Constantinople as squalid and lawless, Buchan made use of another familiar trope, that of the East as a place of exoticism, mystery and mysticism. Accordingly, the prophet, Greenmantle, at the heart of the story is intriguingly and evocatively known amongst his followers simply as 'the Emerald' and his ministers are called 'Sapphire, Ruby, Pearl and Topaz'.<sup>172</sup> When Sandy is called upon to wear Greenmantle's totemic green shirt, Buchan gives it an aura of Oriental splendour completely unfamiliar to Hannay, the stoical Briton: 'I call it silk, but it was like no silk I have ever known, so exquisite in the mesh, with such a sheen and depth in it'.<sup>173</sup> When Hannay tries to picture the prophet himself, the nearest he can get is 'a picture of an old man in a turban coming out of a bottle in a cloud of smoke, which I remembered from a child's edition of the *Arabian Nights*'.<sup>174</sup> However, later, when Sandy describes the prophet, whom he has met, he does so in more nuanced terms, reflecting the views and sympathies of those early twentieth-century writers and explorers who were deeply affected by the existential appeal of the desert and the power of a pared-down, ascetic vision of Islam:

He is the greatest gentleman you can picture, with a dignity like a high mountain. He is a dreamer and a poet, too – a genius if I can judge these things. I think I can assess him rightly, for I know something of the soul of the East ... The West knows nothing of the true oriental. It pictures him as lapped in colour and idleness and luxury and gorgeous dreams. But it is all wrong. The *Kâf* he yearns for is an austere thing. It is the austerity of the East that is its beauty and its terror ....<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., p.139.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., p.245.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., p.150.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., p.174-5.

Arbuthnot's comments reflect the fashionable concerns of the Edwardian intelligentsia already discussed. It is possible that Buchan was also in tune with an apparent empathy amongst British troops not just towards Turkish soldiery, as evidenced for example by Herbert's diaries, but towards Islam, or at least with the idea of fatalism, which was seen as an integral part of it. In a 1919 report on 'The Army and Religion' during the war, the writer, D.S. Cairns, reflected on the 'sudden apparition of an ancient creed' in the trenches, namely fatalism, and also noted the 'remarkable popularity of Omar Khayyám', the medieval Persian astronomer and poet who advocated a philosophy of living life in the moment and to its fullest potential.<sup>176</sup> Thus, in *Greenmantle*, even Hannay is not immune to the attractions of Eastern spirituality. Towards the climax, as he finds himself increasingly at risk of death, he adopts a 'new Kismet philosophy ... I reckoned that if risks were foreordained, so were difficulties, and both must be taken as part of the day's work'.<sup>177</sup> Indeed, there were those in the military who viewed a fatalistic attitude as more appropriate, and certainly more useful in terms of battle effectiveness, for soldiers engaged in industrialised warfare. Michael Snape cites Senior Staff Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Beddington, who asked for the removal of a Chaplain because "[he] would stress all the time that unless you were really good your chances of going to Heaven were poor, whilst the doctrine needed for men of an infantry division, whose expectation of life was bound to be short, should in my view approximate to that of the Mohammedan religion, i.e., he that dies in battle goes to heaven".<sup>178</sup>

Whether Buchan was echoing the fashionable views of the time, empathising with the spiritual crisis faced by soldiers in the trenches, or simply reiterating how tolerance constituted a key element of British national character, the prophet called Greenmantle is depicted as sincere and devout. He 'speaks straight to the

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<sup>176</sup> Cited in Michael Snape, *God and the British Soldier: Religion and the British Army in the First and Second World Wars* (Abingdon, 2005), p.32.

<sup>177</sup> Buchan, *Greenmantle*, p.186.

<sup>178</sup> Snape, p.106.

heart of Islam, and it's an honourable message'.<sup>179</sup> It is, of course, the Germans who are the true villains of the novel. They have taken Greenmantle's message and twisted it into 'part of that damned German propaganda. His unworldliness has been used for a cunning political move, and his creed of space and simplicity for the furtherance of the last word in human degeneracy'.<sup>180</sup> Ironically, it is arguably here that Buchan was most guilty of the sins of Said's Orientalism in his assumption that only with European leadership could Orientals amount to a meaningful foe. As Reeve Spector Simon puts it in *Spies and Holy Wars*, 'for Buchan, while "Islam" was clearly a possible threat to the West, it could also be channeled and controlled by it – if not by Germany, then certainly by Britain. Muslims were waiting for a leader'.<sup>181</sup>

## Conclusions

Was *Greenmantle* a work of propaganda? Absolutely. Just as much as in his non-fiction works for Wellington House, Buchan's intention was to influence opinion by conveying that both Britons and the British Empire were forces that promoted world civilisation in its truest form, thereby explaining and justifying both her belligerence and her imperial status and ambitions. As Hew Strachan has written, 'for Buchan, fact and fiction were not alternatives, but part of a continuum. His novels were vehicles for his ideas and beliefs, a way of propagating values that he thought important through heroes who were often based on real people'.<sup>182</sup> *Greenmantle*'s legacy is therefore not just as a 'classic British spy adventure' or a 'shocker' intended solely to entertain the troops. Buchan's approach, combined with his military and official knowledge, and his relationship with Wellington House, resulted in a work that penetrates to the very heart of Britain's wartime psyche as a belligerent and an imperial power. Like a

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<sup>179</sup> Buchan, *Greenmantle*, p.175.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Simon, p.30.

<sup>182</sup> Strachan, 'John Buchan', p.324.

prehistoric insect caught in amber, Buchan's novel captures the essence of the propagandist message Britain sought to convey to the world in the summer of 1916, revealing both her self-perception as well as the ways in which she defined and understood others.

Buchan's conviction in Britain's role as protector and promoter of civilisation is brought home on the last page of the book, as he describes the approach of the Russian troops towards Erzerum where they are about to defeat the Turks.<sup>183</sup> Hannay and Sandy have joined the Cossack charge. Sandy, who is now impersonating Greenmantle (who has died) and is wearing his green robes, is ahead of Hannay, and Hannay describes the scene:

In the very front, now nearing the city ramparts, was one man. He was like the point of the steel spear soon to be driven home. In the clear morning air I could see that he did not wear the uniform of the invaders. He was turbaned and rode like one possessed, and against the snow I caught the dark sheen of emerald. As he rode it seemed that the fleeing Turks were stricken still, and sank by the roadside with eyes strained after his unheeding figure....

Then I knew that the prophesy had been true, and that their prophet had not failed them. The long-looked-for revelation had come. Greenmantle had appeared at last to an awaiting people.<sup>184</sup>

Sandy, the beacon of British greatness, spearheads the Russian troops. Thus, Buchan's final message is that for true liberation the benighted East must look neither to the Germans, nor to religious faith. It is to the Empire that the beleaguered must turn.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Such a cavalry charge did indeed take place on 16 February 1916.

<sup>184</sup> Buchan, *Greenmantle*, p. 264.

<sup>185</sup> Norman Daniel considered that Buchan had a fantastical understanding of pan-Islam and therefore his ending is 'ridiculous' (Daniel, p.487). Surely, Daniel missed the point? Buchan did not really see Sandy's charge as the 'long looked-for [religious] revelation' for Muslims, but as a 'charge' for freedom, democracy and civilisation.

#### 5.4 *The End of the War and After*

There were a small number of other popular novels published during the war with themes relating to Muslims and the Empire. These include Talbot Mundy's *King of the Khyber Rifles* set in Afghanistan.<sup>186</sup> Like *Greenmantle*, *King of the Khyber Rifles* concerns British efforts to foil an Islamic uprising. Again, it is concluded that 'there has been none in spite of all Turkey's and Germany's efforts. There have been sporadic raids, much as usual, but nothing one brigade could not easily deal with'.<sup>187</sup> In the course of the novel, Mundy emphatically praised the Indian Army for its loyalty to the Empire. 'The Red Sea [was] full of racing transports, crowded with dark-skinned gentlemen whose one prayer was that the war might not be over before they should have struck a blow for Britain'.<sup>188</sup>

Kipling's *The Eyes of Asia*, takes a similar theme in that its aim was to demonstrate to the reader India's loyalty and commitment to the Allied war effort. Although this book does not appear in the Schedule of Literature it has all the hallmarks of a government sponsored work, particularly in the context of documents contained in India Office papers. In June 1916, Edward Long of Wellington House wrote to Arthur Hirtzel informing him that he had been asked to 'publish a book dealing with the part played by Indian soldiers in the war. It would take the form rather of gallant deeds performed by Indian soldiers, and would be published ... for circulation in India, as well as here, and in Neutral Countries'.<sup>189</sup> As Hirtzel's assistant J.E. Shuckburgh put it, the idea was that by recording acts of bravery the deeds 'will speak for themselves: Indians could not have behaved so gallantly if their heart were not in the cause'.<sup>190</sup> However,

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<sup>186</sup> Talbot Mundy, *King of the Khyber Rifles* (London, 1917).

<sup>187</sup> Mundy, p.343.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., p.2.

<sup>189</sup> Long to Hirtzel, 2 June 1916, BL IO L/PS/11/107.

<sup>190</sup> Memorandum by J.E. Shuckburgh, 7 June 1916, BL IO L/PS/11/107.



Hirtzel, with his customary cunning, cautioned that ‘neither from the military nor from the political point of view does it seem desirable to encourage exaggerated ideas of Indian valour .... [T]o separate the “black pepper” from the “red pepper” – to use a metaphor common in letters from Indian soldiers – may give further currency to the belief that most of the fighting has been done by Indians’.<sup>191</sup> Thereafter, interest in the project rapidly waned and eventually the idea was dropped, ostensibly because ‘it was found that there was no adequate material available on which to base it’.<sup>192</sup>

Edmund Barrow, the India Office’s Military Secretary, suggested that it would take Rudyard Kipling to put things in ‘proper perspective’, in other words, to ensure that any account of Indian bravery was put in the context of the considerably greater bravery of their white counterparts.<sup>193</sup> It appears that Kipling was indeed approached at around the same time and given extracts from the censored letters of Indian soldiers with a view to working out ‘how best to give intelligence to neutrals’.<sup>194</sup> *The Eyes of Asia*, an epistolary novel containing four letters from Indian soldiers serving in Europe to friends and family at home recounting their impressions of the war, was the result. The idea of relying on Indian gallantry to evidence loyalty to the Empire was dropped entirely. Instead, the Indians in these fictional letters were humble and naive, loyal servants to the Empire, upon whom, Kipling was keen to show, Western civilisation had made an excellent impression during their time in France.

Two of the four letters were from Muslim soldiers, one, a young Afghani sharpshooter, tells his parents that ‘we Indian troops are esteemed and honoured by all’<sup>195</sup> and that ‘France is a country created by Allah, and its people are

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<sup>191</sup> Minute by A. Hirtzel, 21 June 1916, BL IO L/PS/11/107.

<sup>192</sup> Gowers to Shuckburgh, 3 March 1917, BL IO L/PS/11/107.

<sup>193</sup> Note by E. Barrow, 22 June 1916, BL IO L/PS/11/107.

<sup>194</sup> Jain, p.113, citing Sussex Kipling Archive, Ad.40, p.70.

<sup>195</sup> Kipling, *The Eyes of Asia*, p.58.

manifestly a reasonable people'.<sup>196</sup> A Punjabi trooper writes to his mother that he is well cared for, 'I am more comfortable here, I swear it to you, Mother, than any high officer in India'.<sup>197</sup> Kipling referred to the long tradition of honorable service by Muslims in the Indian Army and the respect and monetary rewards such service entailed. Neither the Punjabi nor the Afghan have any criticisms to raise against England or France in their treatment. Whilst they are bemused by some cultural practices, they are impressed with the civilisation they find. The Punjabi assures his mother that he desires 'nothing that is contrary to the Faith' but his exposure to this new world means that 'what was ample yesterday does not cover even the palm of the hand to-day'.<sup>198</sup>

Published in American and British newspapers in 1917, and subsequently printed as a book in America, *The Eyes of Asia* sought to show that colonial troops were not the victims of imperial exploitation but active and willing participants in the Allies' war effort. Kipling also identified and attempted to address a problem which had long concerned Europe's imperialists, namely, the consequences of exposure of the colonised to the Western civilisation they had long found themselves subject to. In an exercise surely of wish fulfillment, he depicted the soldiers as experiencing Western civilisation in a wholly positive light, rather than the hostile, chaotic, barbaric reality of life in the trenches. As the Polish journalist, Ryszard Kapuściński, put it so well (in relation to the second world war), when the colonised came to fight in the white man's war they, within whom 'the notion that the white man was untouchable, unconquerable, that whites constituted a homogeneous, cohesive force' had been inculcated so effectively, were shocked to observe that the white men 'were fighting one another, shooting one another, destroying one another's cities'.<sup>199</sup> Exposing the colonised to the white man's fallibility was fraught with risk.

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid., p.62-3.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., p.80.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., p.100.

<sup>199</sup> Ryszard Kapuściński, *The Shadow of the Sun: My African Life* (London, 2002), p.26.

Of course, the immediate aftermath of the war did witness unrest across the Empire including in Egypt, Afghanistan and India. In a second edition of Percy White's *Cairo*, published in 1919 with a new preface by the author, White blamed the troubles in Egypt on the absence of a strong leader like Kitchener and also on the foibles of the Egyptian character which he said was prone to impatience and extremes of behaviour. The response of the Egyptian to post-war economic hardship and political upheaval was to fall prey to nationalist agitators and give 'ready credence to rumours that his religion was being threatened, that the Caliph was to be nominated by Christians, mosques converted into Christian churches'.<sup>200</sup> It was only a matter of time, argued White, before the people would calm down and 'that sense of ancient peace associated with the noblest monuments of a departed civilisation' could be restored.<sup>201</sup>

*Cairo* was not the only book set in North Africa published in 1919. That year also saw the release of the iconic 'desert romance', E.M. Hull's *The Sheik*.<sup>202</sup> As discussed earlier in this chapter, there were numerous similar novels produced before the war but *The Sheik* was different. In it, an aristocratic English woman, Diana Mayo, is kidnapped and repeatedly, and explicitly, raped by Arab Sheik, Ahmed Ben Hassan, a 'tall and broad-shouldered' man with 'the handsomest and the cruellest face that [the heroine has] ever seen'.<sup>203</sup> After some months, Diana realises that far from hating her captor, she loves him. 'Her heart was given for all time to the fierce desert man who was so different from all other men whom she had met, a lawless savage who had taken her to satisfy a passing fancy and who had treated her with merciless cruelty'.<sup>204</sup> Ben Hassan may be a 'savage',

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<sup>200</sup> White, p.viii.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> E.M. Hull, *The Sheik* (London, 1919). Wife of a pig farmer called Percy, Ethel Hull apparently wrote the novel to amuse herself whilst her husband was serving in France.

<sup>203</sup> Hull, *The Sheik*, p.58.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., p.132.

but Hull depicts him as the epitome of virile masculinity. Although at the end of the book, it transpires that Ben Hassan is really the son of European nobility, the reader is captivated and held in thrall by the idea of an English lady subjugated and violated not by a European aristocrat, but by a man who looks and behaves like the writer's conception of a 'pure Arab'.<sup>205</sup>

*The Sheik* was a huge hit, spawning numerous sequels and imitators as well as Rudolph Valentino's legendary film version. In many subsequent works within the genre, it was no longer necessary for the Arab hero to have secret European antecedents. For example, in Joan Conquest's *Desert Love*, published in 1920, the aristocratic English heroine marries Hahmed, the 'Camel King' of 'South Arabia' whose heritage, although 'noble', was nonetheless pure Arab.<sup>206</sup> In Norma Lorimer's *The Shadow of Egypt*, the married English heroine falls in love with a dashing Syrian Arab. Her English husband, Harold, 'the very manifestation of sound mediocrity'<sup>207</sup>, is contrasted with the spotlessly honorable, 'virile Wolf' who is her Syrian lover.<sup>208</sup> The idea of the romantic Arab sheikh became so popular that, according to historian, Billie Melman, at its highpoint young men imitated the

mannerisms and gestures of the "love god". Arab garments, Arab cigarettes, and Arab motifs in decoration became the craze ... such was the sheikh mania that newspapers in Britain and America pontificated that the emergence and spread of the stereotype of the eastern lover was a threat to the ideals of western manhood.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid., p.238.

<sup>206</sup> Joan Conquest, *Desert Love* (London, 1920).

<sup>207</sup> Norma Lorimer, *The Shadow of Egypt* (London, 1923), p.18.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., p.281.

<sup>209</sup> Jessica Taylor, 'And you can be my Sheikh: Gender, Race, and Orientalism in Contemporary Romance Novels' in *The Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 40, No. 6, pp.1032-1051, p.1037, citing Billie Melman *Women's Orient*s (London, 1992) p.91. There are many possible explanations for the appeal of a more sensual masculinity. One may be found by considering the consequences of the intimacy men experienced in the trenches and the discovery of new emotional responses to the terrors of war. Could this have led to a reassessment of what masculinity meant to them?

Perhaps in these post-war desert romances it is possible to discern a tangible result of Wellington House's propaganda efforts. They illustrate that, as Sykes had desired, the depiction of Arabs for popular consumption was no longer of dirty, avaricious bandits warranting only disdain, but of noble, virile, masculine men, who were even allowed to penetrate the virtue of English women.<sup>210</sup> The popularity of such novels was almost certainly also a reaction to the emasculating, disempowering experience of trench warfare as the war in Arabia increasingly came to be seen as a venue for more traditional, and romantic, ideas of what war ought to entail, as well as a means of escaping from the tragedies and deprivations of the war's immediate aftermath at home. Equally, whilst the imperial bravura of the late nineteenth century was a thing of the past, in the war's immediate aftermath there was a newfound confidence, and certainty, in Britain's global positioning. After all, she had secured and extended her empire and won the war. With the masculinity and virility of her own stock proven, she could afford to be magnanimous in accommodating others.

The prewar taste for the Orient of myth as a means of escapism after the war is evident in the success of theatrical productions with an Oriental theme, including a stage version of Robert Hichens' 1904 novel, *The Garden of Allah*, which played in 1920 and, according to *The Bookman*, vividly recreated the desert landscape. 'The camels, the mules, the goats, the sand, the sandstorm, the apparatus of the East, are all so real that over against them the raptures and despairs of the lovers seem almost artificial'.<sup>211</sup> 1923 saw the first stage production of Flecker's *The Story of Hassan*. Again, it was the pageantry, the spectacle, the costumes, the vigour of the production that led to packed houses and impressed the critics.<sup>212</sup> In the words of Basil Dean, *Hassan*'s producer, Flecker had a 'nostalgia and a panache for the colour, the lust and the cruelty of

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<sup>210</sup> Undoubtedly, Sykes himself would have balked at this final conclusion!

<sup>211</sup> 'Robert Hichens as Playwright' in *The Bookman*, September 1920, pp.190-193, p.192.

<sup>212</sup> For example, *The Weekly Westminster Gazette* 29 September 1923, *The Bookman* October 1923, *The Sketch* 3 October 1923, cited in Dawn Redwood, *Flecker and Delius – the Making of 'Hassan'* (London, 1978), Appendix II.

the East as it existed in the illustrated pages of *One Thousand and One Nights* and it was this that he sought to recreate.<sup>213</sup> The production ran for 281 performances and was a critical, as well as a financial, success.<sup>214</sup> In the immediate aftermath of the war, London's theatre goers clearly had an appetite for the luxurious, the sensuous and the exotic, tastes that were not lost on American journalist, Lowell Thomas, the man commonly held responsible for creating the mythological T.E. Lawrence, the 'modern Arabian Knight .... the mysterious blond Bedouin'.<sup>215</sup>

Thomas, had originally come to Europe in 1917 looking for a story to report to readers back home. It did not take him long to realise that the mechanised, attritional warfare of the Western Front was unlikely to produce the kind of drama he had in mind. He went to Wellington House, and it was John Buchan who suggested he go instead to Palestine and put him in touch with General Allenby. He met Lawrence in Jerusalem in early 1918 and spent some time with him in Aqaba and in the desert. In early 1919 he wrote an illustrated lecture about the war for an American audience which he subsequently adapted to *With Allenby in Palestine* and presented in Covent Garden in August 1919.<sup>216</sup> This was as much an 'Oriental show', as Hitchens' or Flecker's. According to Philip Knightley, in his introduction to the 2002 edition of Thomas's subsequent book about Lawrence:

when the curtain went up, several exotically-dressed young women performed the Dance of the Seven Veils in front of a set which portrayed the Nile with the distant pyramids faintly illuminated by the moon. A lyric tenor then sang a haunting musical parody of the Islamic call to prayer. As Thomas himself came on stage, braziers in the theatre aisles poured Oriental incense into the air.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> James Elroy Flecker, *Hassan* (London, 1970), Introduction by Basil Dean, p.xix.

<sup>214</sup> Redwood, p.72. In contrast, when it transferred to Broadway it was an unmitigated disaster, reputedly losing £100,000 which was a record loss for a Broadway production.

<sup>215</sup> Lowell Thomas, *With Lawrence in Arabia* (2002), p.1-2.

<sup>216</sup> He later changed the name to *With Allenby in Palestine and Lawrence in Arabia*.

<sup>217</sup> Thomas, *With Lawrence*, Introduction by Philip Knightley, p.ix.

MacKenzie argues that the huge popularity of Thomas's show (it is estimated that four million people saw it) and the emergence of the Lawrence of legend filled a need 'to find an exhilarating, romantic and heroic corner of the war with recognisable objectives that would make the carnage seem worthwhile'.<sup>218</sup> He may be overlooking revisionist historiography that emphasises the positive, commemorative attitude to the war commonly held in the interwar period in his reference to the public's need to justify the 'carnage' of the war.<sup>219</sup> However, MacKenzie is certainly right to identify the ongoing need for a British hero who fulfilled enduring expectations, the type of hero epitomised by Sandy Arbuthnot in *Greenmantle*. But in Lawrence, the imperial hero was subtly changed. By dressing as an Arab, he attached to himself their vitality, and newfound masculinity, whilst retaining his Englishness. He was doubly heroic.

The recent discovery of correspondence between Buchan and theatrical producer Leon Lion from the period 1919 to 1922 indicates that Buchan also sought to capitalise on the public's appetite for Eastern-themed productions by attempting to bring *Greenmantle* to the stage.<sup>220</sup> Notably, a letter from 1921 reveals that Buchan changed the setting for the final scenes from Erzerum to Jerusalem, conceivably to tie in with Thomas's show and ride on the T.E. Lawrence bandwagon.<sup>221</sup> Lawrence was representative not only of revitalised British heroism, he was also manifestly an imperialist for the post-war world order, a natural leader like his pre-war predecessors because he was an Englishman, but further, he was one who understood and could collaborate with 'natives' and hence help them to realise their own destiny. He was thus an essential figure of post-war British imperialism. Unsurprisingly, by 1929, when Buchan wrote *The*

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<sup>218</sup> MacKenzie, 'T.E. Lawrence', p.163.

<sup>219</sup> See, for example, Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* and Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge, 2008).

<sup>220</sup> Kate Macdonald, 'The Greenmantle Letters', *The John Buchan Journal*, Spring 2007, Issue 36, pp. 37-41.

<sup>221</sup> Macdonald, 'The Greenmantle Letters', p.40.

*Courts of the Morning*, his representation of Sandy Arbuthnot now shared more traits with Lawrence than Herbert.<sup>222</sup> In his memoirs, Buchan observed, 'I am not a very tractable person or much of a hero-worshipper, but I could have followed Lawrence over the edge of the world. I loved him for himself, and also because there seemed to be reborn in him all the lost friends of my youth'.<sup>223</sup> Clearly, for Buchan and many others, Lawrence symbolised neither just the post-war imperial 'facilitator' of independence under British tutelage, nor was he simply the last in a long line of maverick imperial heroes stretching back to 'Clive of India' and 'Gordon of Khartoum'. He was also a living reminder of the 'lost generation', of the officer class for whom greatness had been promised, but whose lives had been cut short in Flanders. It is surely no wonder that Lawrence himself found the weight of expectation thrust upon him, too much to bear. Ironically, it was Buchan who secured his entry into the RAF.



In an article on Anglo-Indian literature during the Raj, American academic, Robin Jared Lewis, summarised it as asking two basic questions: 'Who are we?' and 'What are we doing here?'.<sup>224</sup> According to Lewis, novelist Paul Scott (author of the *Raj Quartet*) believed that the answer to the second question would suffice for the first as well. These questions, it is asserted here, have much broader application. Surely they are what is being asked by the novelists throughout this chapter? This was an exercise in both introspection and in the outward projection of attempts to explain and justify Britain's global imperial project and, subsequently, her wartime belligerence. Edwardian novelists

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<sup>222</sup> For example, Sandy professes himself 'horribly unsusceptible' to love and uninterested in pursuing a political career: 'I'd rather eat cold mutton in a cabman's shelter' (John Buchan, *The Courts of the Morning* (London, 1929), p.18-19). He feels himself left behind, lost in the post-war world like 'the old buccaneer marooned on a rock, watching his ancient companions passing in ocean liners' (Buchan, *Courts*, p.21).

<sup>223</sup> Buchan, *Memory*, p.218.

<sup>224</sup> Robin Jared Lewis, 'The Literature of the Raj' in Robin W. Winks and James R. Rush eds. *Asia in Western Fiction*, pp.53-70, p.68.



answered the question, ‘What are we doing here?’, by considering a number of underlying questions: what did Britain represent, who were her people, what did she want, who and what stood in opposition to her and her aims?

It is apparent from these novels that the era was one of confusion and contradiction. The Empire was at its zenith, but a sense of its frailty was perceptible. Imperialism was losing favour and was viewed by some, in the words of Sir Charles Lucas, as implying ‘military domination, despotic rule, aggression on other liberties’ and yet it continued to be seen by others as possessing a moral authority because of the benefits bestowed upon the colonised.<sup>225</sup> George V was proclaimed the greatest Mohammedan leader, and yet the authorities lived in fear of pan-Islam and its perceived relationship with fanaticism. Progress and industrialisation advanced relentlessly, and yet there was a yearning for a simpler, more spiritual life. Racial theories proclaimed the Anglo-Saxon to be the ultimate human race, and yet degeneracy was a prevailing fear. The East was a prism for contemplating and reflecting upon these conflicting notions. Once the war began, Britain identified herself in opposition to Germany, but, as has been shown from the examination of *Greenmantle*, it remains possible to discern the nuances of developing ideas of the East in keeping with Britain’s wartime preoccupations and strategies. A new approach emerged after the war, where the Arabs became unequivocally the stuff of romance, aided by the emerging legend of T.E. Lawrence and the excitement of the desert campaigns. The extent to which this was a consequence of Mark Sykes’s propagandist efforts remains open to speculation. It may have been a factor, but in the drab, mournful period that followed the end of the war, there were many other reasons why an exotic Eastern trope was appealing.

What it is hoped is evident from this chapter is a consistency in approach stemming across official propagandist material and the novels of the period not

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<sup>225</sup> Lucas, p.2.

least because it was frequently those very novelists who were also responsible for Wellington House's publications. Masterman turned to them for a reason. In the years leading up to the war, they were already engaged in answering the questions 'Who are we?' and 'What are we doing here?' Wartime writing was frequently simply a continuation of this theme.

## Conclusion

Wellington House's overriding remit was clear from the outset. Under Masterman's auspices the brief was to convince allies and neutrals why, in the ideological battle with Germany, it was the British model that was more worthy. Articulating the merits of British civilisation was already a cornerstone of imperialist discourse and hence the propagandists stepped seamlessly into their wartime role. Britain's imperial status was equally determinative when Turkey joined the war in November 1914, this time resulting in a period of relative stasis and uncertainty as Britain sought to balance her position as ruler of almost a hundred million Muslim subjects and her belligerent relationship with the holders of the caliphate. As Pickthall put it, '[i]n Turkey beats the heart of Moslem India, Moslem Egypt – of every land where we [the British] bear rule over Mohammedans'.<sup>1</sup> Despite committed efforts on the part of the Central Powers to stoke a global jihad, only two pamphlets were published by Wellington House on the causes of the rupture with Turkey, whilst 1915 saw the publication of a mere two additional works, one on Gallipoli and another on the Armenian massacres.

By late 1915 Wellington House had found its stride, and, as its ties with the Foreign Office became closer, and Mark Sykes, with his opportunistic and bullish approach towards British imperialism, began to take an interest, a securer notion of what was wanted in terms of Muslim propaganda began to emerge. There were two strands to this developing approach: first, the depiction of Ottoman Asia and Britain's relationship with it to allies and neutrals, Wellington House's target market; second, the articulation of a message of prestige and 'friendship' to the world's Muslim population. In this latter regard, no differentiation was made between Muslims within the British Empire and without. There was assumed to be a standard 'Mohammedan mind'. As Wellington House's Reports indicate, the quintessential Muslim was not the French-educated Turk, Bengali nationalist

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<sup>1</sup> Marmaduke Pickthall, *Muslim Protest* (London, 1919), p.15.

or Iraqi scholar but a simple, literal fellow, who responded to pictures and evidence of military and economic might, and it was principally through *al-Haqīqah* and the other illustrated magazines, that Wellington House addressed this need. In Arthur Hirtzel's words, via pictures and simple captions, the purpose of the magazines was 'to illustrate the strength and successes of the allies, their honourable methods of fighting, their compassion for the weak and suffering, their respect for religion and what Great Britain especially has done to assist pilgrims etc.etc.'<sup>2</sup> This was cultural 'outreach' in its most essential form, and it was through this striking and prolific work that the propagandists diverged dramatically from what was increasingly seen as their outmoded literary style and instead provided material that not only sat comfortably with the Ministry of Information's approach to propaganda from March 1918 but also had ongoing currency after the war.

The depiction of Ottoman Asia in pamphlets aimed at allies and neutrals was a more nuanced affair. There is, on the whole, evidence of a benign approach towards the Turks in the first two years of the war. There were several reasons for this, including the need not to undermine the British Empire's own military performance by belittling the Ottoman victors in the Dardanelles and Mesopotamia, but other factors, in particular Britain's desired status as 'friend' to Islam, were also important. Although these pamphlets and books were not aimed directly at Muslim readers, they nevertheless largely sought to avoid denigrating the Turks on the basis of their religion. To have done so would have undermined the idea of the Empire as a tolerant and moral undertaking which was part of Wellington House's projection of British civilisation as the exemplar of world order. There was also the risk of exposure of British hypocrisy should such pamphlets end up, via enemy activities, or other means of distribution, in Muslim hands. The exception in the early pamphlets was Toynbee's 1915 work *Armenian Atrocities* which, drawing heavily on the testimony of Christian

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<sup>2</sup> Hirtzel to Long, 11 February 1916, BL IO L/PS/10/581/457.

missionaries and aimed, as it is asserted in this thesis, entirely at an American audience, took an unequivocal East versus West, Islam versus Christianity, approach.

Written in the summer of 1916, John Buchan's *Greenmantle* accorded with Wellington House's approach at this time. Building on the cultural preoccupations of the prewar years, the respectable Anatolian and the 'clean fighting Turk' remained subjects for approbation. It was the CUP with its Levantine influences that warranted disdain and the malign Prussian influence that explained Turkish aggression. Islam was a noble and worthy religion, its ascetic appeal resonating in Buchan's description of the eponymous Islamic prophet and his ethos. Through Hannay and, in particular, Sandy Arbuthnot, Buchan made the case for British civilisation, contrasting it less with an Oriental equivalent than with German militarism. Whilst, the setting may have been 'Eastern', *Greenmantle* was a novel about Britain's war with Germany which was, and remained, the propagandists' overwhelming concern.

The summer of 1916 also witnessed the start of the Arab Revolt and the hardening of Sykes' position regarding the dismantlement of the Ottoman Empire and the espousal of the rights of its minority populations. The Syria pamphlet, written in mid-1916, marked a turning point in the representation of the Turks and, especially, the Arabs. No longer avaricious reprobates, the Arabs emerged, along with the Armenians, Greeks, Kurds and Jews, as the tragic victims of Ottoman oppression. The Blue Book consolidated this approach and it was further cemented by early 1917 with the articulation of the British position to Woodrow Wilson and the implementation of the 'Turk Must Go' campaign. Sykes's two articles in *The Times* of February and March respectively and the Baghdad Proclamation best illustrate the new approach, one that continued until the end of the war. 'Murderous tyranny' became the catchword for the Ottoman regime, whose victims deserved help in realising their own aspirations under

Allied patronage. Unthinking, unnurturing, devouring: the Ottoman Empire was the antithesis of the British version thereby disqualifying the Turks from involvement in the future of the heterogenous minorities currently under their sway.

If the whole history of Ottoman imperialism was to be damned as an exercise in violence and exploitation, the CUP continued to be the subject of specific odium for its cynical abuse of Islam. The failed exploitation of jihad confirmed the party's irreligiousness whilst also, of course, underscoring the faith of the Empire's Muslims in the British imperial project. As Islam's 'friend' it remained essential that Britain appear balanced and informed. Then, as now, the British touted their 'cultural sensitivity, experience and knowledge of the Orient'.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the propagandists did not so much condemn the idea of jihad as emphasise that the CUP had used it insincerely. To the extent that Islam was instrumentalised by Britain, it was as a means of differentiating the CUP, and often the entire Anatolian population, from other Muslims in the course of which the Turks were depicted as 'bad' Muslims, atheists or 'infidels' whose actions no longer entitled them to the caliphate, or indeed, to espouse such a noble and worthy faith. Thus, the Arab revolt was attributed not only to nascent nationalism but to a desire to remove themselves from the yoke of the impious Young Turk administration. More generally, the propagandists sought to avoid religious allusions, including biblical and crusader references, that could lead to adverse implications in terms of Britain's espousal of tolerance towards other faiths, although as evidenced, for example, by Toynbee's ongoing articulation of the Armenian massacres as a Muslim/Christian clash and Benson's attribution of them to Islamic fanaticism, there remained a lack of absolute homogeneity in the pamphlets which speaks to the relative freedom given to writers by Wellington House and the fact that not all were commissioned with the same purpose.

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<sup>3</sup> Porter, *Military Orientalism*, p.58.

That the propagandists largely shared a world view during the war is by now clear. This explains the self-censorship that determined the relative freedom given to Britain's writers. Pickthall took advantage of this in his journalism, but he, too, shared his generation's views on the superiority of Western civilisation, comparing it with the less advanced Oriental version. Pickthall's particular objection was to the way many indiscriminately conflated Oriental government with the tenets of Islam which, in his view (as it developed during the war), was a more progressive religion than Christianity. His novels were exceptional because they took an enlightened approach to race as well as religion. Whereas Pickthall earnestly attempted to convey the perspective of the colonised, the majority of authors had little interest in looking beyond the Western experience of the East. As argued in Chapter Five, it was a forum for exploring their own preoccupations not understanding other cultures or peoples. The Muslims of Eastern fiction were thus as loosely connected to reality as was the archetypal 'Mohammedan' of Wellington House's propaganda.

The overwhelming perspective of Britain's writers reflected the biodeterministic beliefs of the age. From Buchan, to Sykes, Parker, Benson, Stuermer, Hamilton, Toynbee, Bryce, Masterman and others, there was a belief in the superiority not only of British civilisation (which encompassed Christianity) but of the British race. Thus stereotypes abound in representations of the Ottomans. They could be stupid, stolid, cunning, cowardly, greedy, lascivious, hypocritical, dishonest, cruel. They were also capable of fanaticism and barbarism, although, as has been seen, such labels were also applied enthusiastically to the Germans. Postcolonial theorist, Homi Bhabha, observes that the stereotype 'is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always "in place", already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated ... as if the essential duplicity of the Asiatic or the bestial sexual licence of the African that needs no proof, can never really, in discourse, be proved'.<sup>4</sup> This is a helpful reminder of the

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<sup>4</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Routledge, 1994), p.66.

contention that imperialist discourse, the assertion of superiority, went hand in hand with a sense of frailty, ephemerality and disenchantment. The Ottomans were despised but could also prompt responses of fear, admiration and respect. Equally, reliance on positive stereotypes, stemming from the romance and glamour of a region still perceived in the context of the *Nights*, was a means of asserting the difference and innate inferiority of the East, but also an articulation of concerns regarding what had been lost in the West in the interests of progress.

A fascinating undertaking, touched upon in Chapter Five, would be a closer reading of post-war texts, films and theatrical productions to locate how the war effected changes in fictional Eastern tropes. This is but one of a number of avenues yet to be explored. For example, Russia and France also shared a long and complex history with Muslim populations. How similar or divergent were their approaches during the war? Similarly, whilst German propaganda aimed at Muslims has been touched upon, a thorough comparison remains to be undertaken. A brief glimpse indicates that Wellington House's assertion that German efforts lacked the subtlety and sophistication of British methods is a fair one. A further important area requiring investigation is press reporting. Whilst this has been referred to, for example, in the context of Press Notices, Sykes's newspaper articles and efforts to censor Pickthall's journalism, to illustrate how Whitehall sought to manage reporting to accord with their agenda, an analysis of the extent to which the press fell in with Wellington House's approach is called for. An examination of pamphlets produced by Wellington House on India, to consider why they were produced and the extent to which the Government of India deployed them, is also merited. India Office records indicate that, like their reaction to *al-Haqīqah*, the response to propaganda produced in London was muted but then, as with Ottoman-related propaganda, London's publications on India were aimed principally at allies and neutrals not at Indians.



These avenues for further exploration remind us of the range of historiographical debates the subject of propaganda touches upon and the importance of examining it from a number of perspectives. There is a danger in seeing its production strictly in terms of society's racial or cultural stereotyping, or in light of the exigencies of war or government policy. Instead, the construction of Ottoman Asia and its Muslim peoples was a syncretism of all of these, not to mention the role of the individual. Perhaps this is true of all wartime propaganda. What made the depiction of the Ottomans different was that it was also part of a longer story of imperial identity and imperial ambition.

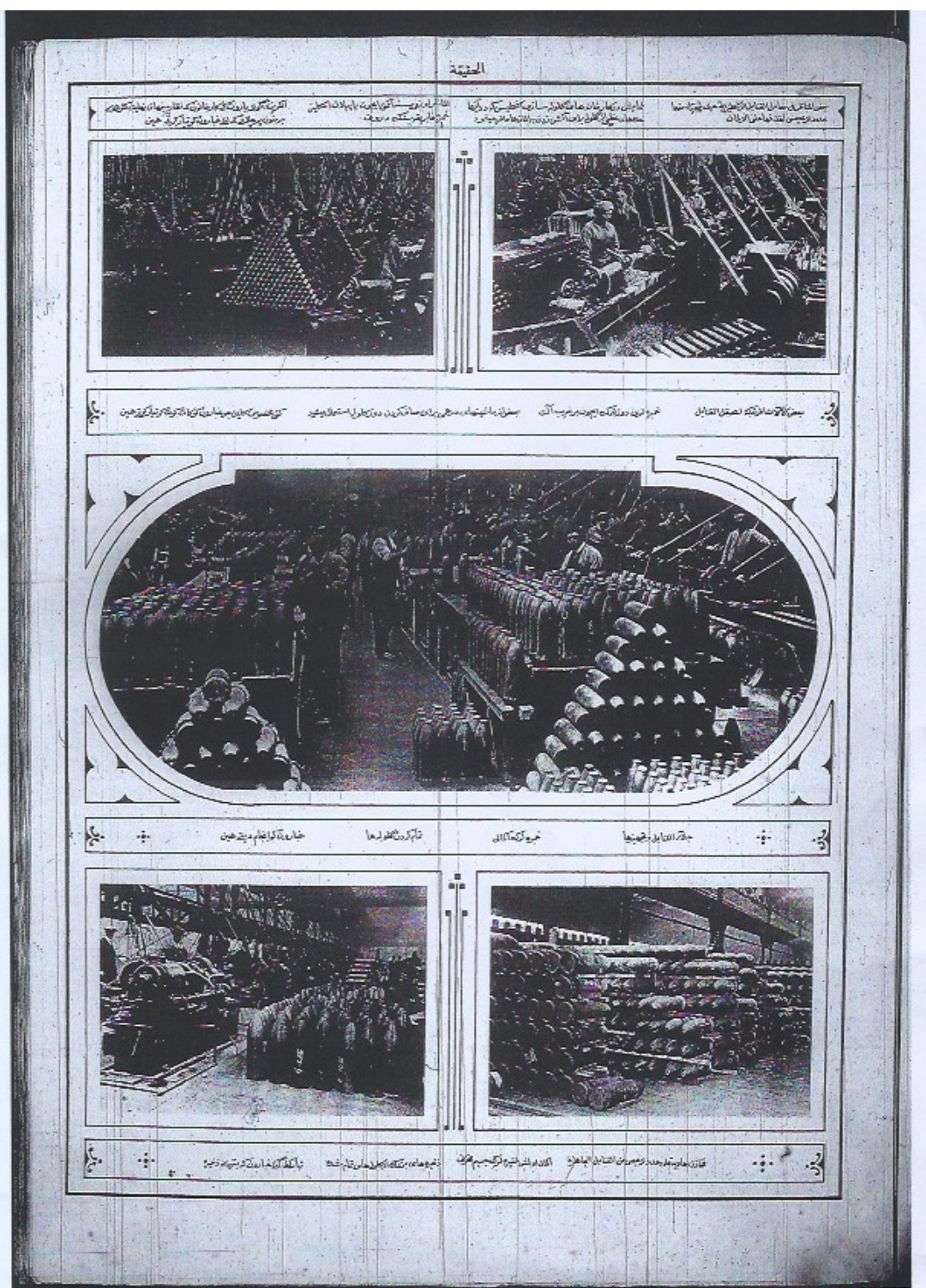
## Appendix 1

### Extracts from *Al-Haqīqah*

- Images 1 to 3 provide examples from early editions of British munitions factories emphasising the scale of Britain's power.
- Images 4, 5 and 6 from 1918 show evidence of British military strength and prowess.
- Image 7 shows the Sherif of Mecca, who by the time of publication had styled himself the King of Hejaz. The text emphasises that the Sherif is the true upholder and defender of Islam in contrast to the tyrannical and oppressive Ottoman regime and that his revolt was instigated from within.
- Image 8 shows Wellington House seeking to illustrate Arab autonomy in their pursuit of independence.
- Images 9 and 10 show Britain and, indeed, France, as 'friend' and 'protector' of Islam.
- Image 11 suggests Turkish tyranny and also Indian support for Britain's war effort.
- Image 12, again, shows Indian support for Britain's war effort.
- Image 13 shows a title page from an early edition in which a picture of the King looking regal and powerful on horseback was used to convey a sense of British prestige.

No. 1

*Al-Haqīqah*: The Arabic translation at the top is roughly translated as follows: 'Some views in English [munitions] factories where an innumerable number are being prepared to be shot at the Germans'.



Source: *Al-Haqīqah* (British Library Microfilm: Or.Mic10535/1)



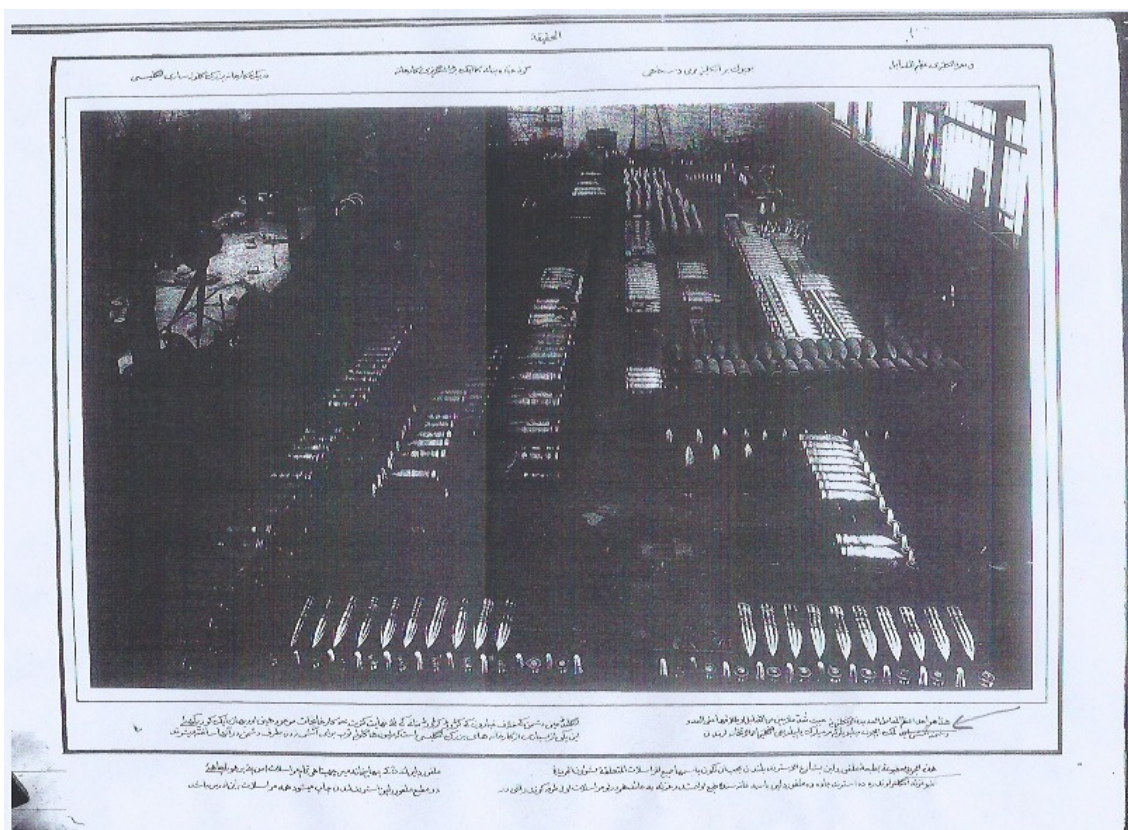
No. 2

*Al-Haqīqah*: 'A great English battleship being built'.

Source: *Al-Haqīqah* (British Library Microfilm: Or.Mic10535/1)

No.3

*Al-Haqīqah*: ‘Inside a great English factory that manufactures bombs’. Below the picture: ‘This is one of the greatest English factories where they prepare millions of bombs to be launched at the enemy’.



Source: *Al-Haqīqah* (British Library Microfilm: Or.Mic10535/1)











No.6

*Al-Haqīqah*: 23 January 1918. Above the picture the caption reads, 'This is a great British cannon, a 'Howitzer', on the Western Front'.

Underneath the picture a further caption explains, 'This cannon throws its great shells in an arch trajectory over mountains and forests hitting enemy installations'.



Source: *Al-Haqīqah* (British Library Microfilm: Or.Mic10535/1)





Previous page: The Arabic section at the top of the picture is roughly translated as follows: 'This is the picture of his Royal Highness Hussein bin Ali, the King of Hejaz, being descended from the prophet Mohammed and the Sherif of Mecca and Guardian of the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina, and he is the defender of Islam and acknowledged as such by the believers in all the countries of the world. The fiefdoms of the Hejaz were previously independent but a few years ago, and after the Hejaz railway was built, the Turks took over the country. The Arabs did not like the Turks taking their rights and privileges. Since the beginning of the war the tyranny has become worse and they are persecuting and oppressing the people and treating them viciously. Despite warnings and advice, because of crimes against the Arabs in Syria committed by the Turks and, through them, the Ottoman Sultanate, the Sherif rose up and beat the Turks completely with his army. A few months ago the Sherif declared his independence and his rule over the Hejaz. He published a declaration that the Hejaz is fully independent and free of the tyranny and enslavement of the Turks and from all foreign intervention and that all the sherifs, princes, the scholars of the two holy places and representatives of the people, recognise the Sherif's right to rule as King of the Hejaz'.



*Al-Haqīqah*: 23 January 1918 edition. The Arabic caption accompanying the pictures reads, 'In the first picture you can see His Royal Highness Prince Feisal (second person from the right) [it looks like Ronald Storrs to his right] and he is the son of His Majesty the King of the Hejaz and leader of one of the Hashemite armies that are successfully fighting the Turks during these times. In the second picture you see a group of askaris with the Hashemite Arab flag [designed by Sykes]'.<sup>1</sup>





No. 9

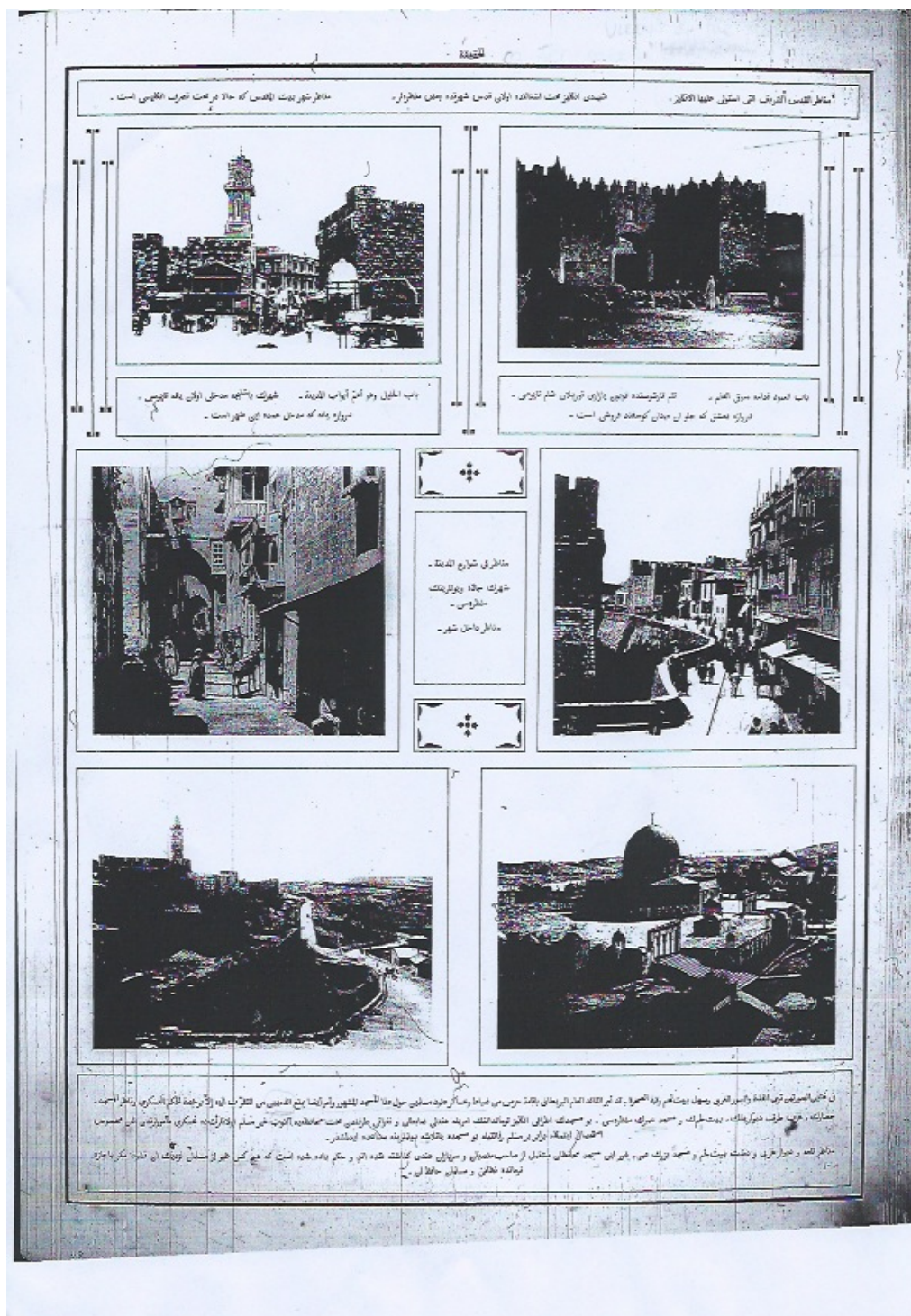
*Al-Haqīqah*: The top pair of pictures refer to a mosque that has been set up in Paris for injured Muslim soldiers in France. The bottom picture is described as showing princes of Sudan who met the Prince Regent when he visited Khartoum.



Source: *Al-Haqīqah* (British Library Microfilm: Or.Mic10535/1)



*Al-Haqīqah*: ‘Views of Holy Jerusalem that the English took over’. The caption beneath the bottom pair of pictures reads, ‘In these two photos you see the Citadel, the Western Wall and the Field of Bethlehem and the Dome of the Rock. The Commander of the British troops has ordered that a guard of Indian Muslim officers and soldiers be set up around this famous mosque and he also ordered that non-Muslims are not allowed in proximity without the licence of the commander and the authority of the keeper of the mosque’.



*Source: Al-Haqīqah (British Library Microfilm: Or.Mic10535/1)*



[illegible]



قیمت آباک آن  
هر مینے میں دو دفعہ چیتا  
قیمت دو شاہی  
هر ماه دو مرتبه چار بشود

الحقیقة

شمن النسخة ۲۰ باره ۴ ملیمات  
تصدر فی کل شهر مرتین  
نسخه ۲۰ باره در  
اون بش حكونده برگره نشر اولنور

لندن فی یوم الجمعة ۱۱ شوال ۱۲۳۵ میلادی ۱۱ « آب ۱۲۳۴



هذه الوثائق هي منسوخة من النسخ الأصلية التي كانت موجودة في مكتبة الملك فهد بن عبدالعزيز في الرياض، والتي كانت موجودة في مكتبة الملك فهد بن عبدالعزيز في الرياض، والتي كانت موجودة في مكتبة الملك فهد بن عبدالعزيز في الرياض.



No. 13

*Al-Haqīqah*: 7 April 1916 - Title Page. Caption in Arabic describes picture as 'His Royal Highness the King of England and the Emperor of India'.



Source: *Al-Haqīqah* (British Library Microfilm: Or.Mic10535/1)



## Appendix 2

### Distribution of *Satya Vani* and *Jangi Akbar* in India and Afghanistan

Distribution of *Satya Vani* and *Jangi Akbar* from a houseboat at the Hindu Mela Festival in India, 1918. The distributors, Messrs. Wheeler and Co., wrote to Edward Long describing how successful their display had been. By the end of the Mela month, the reporter, Mr Lisle Wheeler (in picture with topee), claimed there were very few people at the Mela who had not heard of the papers. 'Whole villages from all parts of India attend this Mela, and each village has its own camp. All the inhabitants were reading copies of the papers'.<sup>1</sup>



Source: British Library (India Office L/PS/10/581/567)

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<sup>1</sup> 'The Mela', Memorandum on Distribution of Propaganda in India, by Lisle Wheeler, undated, BL IO L/PS/10/581/565.

Newsagents of NW Frontier and Afghanistan in Peshawar holding 25,000 copies of *Jangi Akbar* (it was implemented in mid-1917 and used the same photographs as *al-Haqīqah* but was printed in Urdu, Hindi and Gurumukhi and directed at the North and North-West of India) with 'His Majesty at the Front conversing with Sir Douglas Haig' on the front cover. Long wrote to Shuckburgh, 'I am informed that this issue was extremely popular on account of His Majesty's portrait'.<sup>2</sup>



*Source: British Library (India Office L/PS/10/581/482)*

<sup>2</sup> Long to Shuckburgh, 16 August 1917, BL IO L/PS/10/581/481.

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<sup>1</sup> Unpublished, undated, anonymous typed document produced shortly after the war - although IWM think it may have been as late as 1937 this seems unlikely from the tone of the writing which talks of the war as if it has just ended.

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